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Asanti Daughter of Zion: The life and memory of Harriet Tubman

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ASANTI DAUGHTER OF ZION: THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF HARRIET
TUBMAN

Volume I of II

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

History

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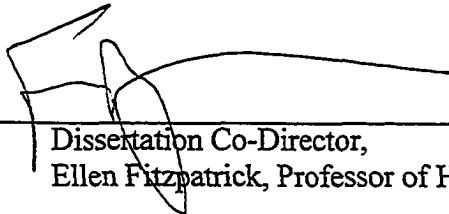
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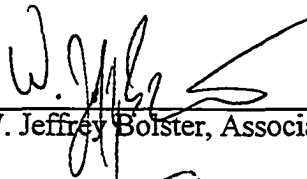
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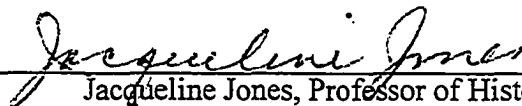
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DEDICATION

To Spencer, Rebecca and Trevor.

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ABSTRACT

ASANTE DAUGHTER OF ZION: THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF HARRIET

TUBMAN

By

Katherine Clifford Larson

University of New Hampshire, May 2003

We all believe that we know Harriet Tubman (1820-1913): slave, famous conductor on the Underground Railroad, abolitionist, spy, nurse, and suffragist. Her successful, secret journeys into the slave states to rescue bondwomen, men, and children have immortalized her in the minds of Americans for over one hundred and thirty years. One of the most famous women in our nation's history, we have come to know the narrative of her life only through juvenile biographies. These stories made Tubman's life a legendary one by reconstituting her into a historical and cultural icon suitable for mass consumption as the "Mother of her race." More myth than reality, this historical image has not always been representative of Tubman's real life experience.

Through the use of long disregarded and obscured historical records, and utilizing archival resources unavailable to earlier biographers, this dissertation reveals new details of Harriet Tubman's long life, many of them resurrected after years of oversight and neglect. By placing Tubman within an historical context, this dissertation examines the familial, social, cultural, political, and economic factors that shaped and influenced her life under slavery and in freedom. Relevant contexts include (but are not limited to)

Evangelical Protestantism, slave culture, gender roles, regional variations in the slave and free black experience unique to the Eastern Shore and Chesapeake area where Tubman grew up, the abolitionist movement, the Underground Railroad, refugee communities in the North, the Civil War, the nature of community life in Auburn, N.Y., where Tubman settled after the war, humanitarian work in the African American community, and the woman's suffrage movement.

"Asante Daughter of Zion" also highlights the critical choices made over time to mute and rewrite Tubman's life narrative, making her an acceptable image suitable for mass consumption as the "Mother of her race." This dissertation explores the ways in which the historical obscurity of the details of Tubman's life remain intricately woven in the racial, class and gender dynamics of our nation.

INTRODUCTION

We all believe that we know Harriet Tubman (1820-1913): slave, famous conductor on the Underground Railroad, abolitionist, spy, nurse, and suffragist. Her successful, secret journeys into the slave states to rescue bondwomen, men, and children have immortalized her in the minds of Americans for over one hundred and thirty years. One of the most famous women in our nation's history, we have come to know the narrative of her life only through juvenile biographies. These stories made Tubman's life a legendary one by reconstituting her into a historical and cultural icon suitable for mass consumption as the "Mother of her race." More myth than reality, Tubman's historical image has not always been so static.

Referred to as "Moses" in her time, Tubman was an escaped slave best known for her role as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. Her secret journeys into the slave states to rescue bondwomen, men, and children have immortalized her in the minds of Americans for over one hundred and thirty years. Suffering under the lash, disabled by a near fatal head injury, Tubman rose above remarkable childhood adversity to emerge with a will of steel and a determination to seek freedom, equality and justice for herself, her family and community. Refusing to be bound by the chains of slavery, or by the gender and racial conventions of her day, Tubman struggled against amazing odds to pursue her lifelong passions of liberty, equality, and self-determination for all suffering from under the weight of oppression.

Working as an abolitionist, spy, nurse, soldier, suffragist and community activist, Tubman's life story is dominated by a constant physical and spiritual struggle against violence and oppression. Supported by an intensely deep spiritual faith in God's guidance, and a life long humanitarian passion for family and community, Tubman demonstrated an unyielding, and often remarkably fearless, determination to secure liberty and equality in their lifetimes. Tubman's story reveals twin themes of resistance and liberation, equality and justice. These themes reflect at once both very personal and yet collective experiences that resonate among Americans of many backgrounds.

In 1863, Franklin B. Sanborn, editor of the *Commonwealth*, an antislavery newspaper in Boston, published the first biographical sketch of Harriet Tubman. "The true romance of America," he wrote, could be found "in the story of the fugitive slaves."¹ Setting the stage for future biographies by other authors, Sanborn claimed that the drama of Tubman's life story had the "power to shake the nation that so long was deaf to her cries."² Two years later, Ednah Dow Cheney added to Sanborn's sketch, describing Tubman as "probably the most remarkable woman of this age," who "has performed more wonderful deeds by the native power of her own spirit than any other."³ With the publication in 1869 of Sarah Bradford's biography, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* followed by William Still's famous 1871 documentary volume, *The Underground Railroad*, Tubman's status as a heroine without equal was established.⁴ Harriet Tubman's fortitude and determination in the face of formidable adversity has left us with an image of a woman, an icon, a heroine of mythic proportions. Yet, very little is really known about her. Although she lived to nearly one hundred, Tubman spent the second half of her life in what is assumed to have been relative obscurity in Auburn, N.Y.

There are only three true biographies for adults; Sarah Bradford's short biography, *Scenes* published in 1869, and her revised edition published in 1886 entitled *Harriet Tubman: The Moses of Her People*; and a biography by Earl Conrad called *Harriet Tubman*, published in 1943.⁵ There are several motion pictures or documentaries, over forty juvenile biographies, and one adult novel, which are all fictionalized histories. Most of these books and other items relied on Bradford and Conrad, either directly or indirectly, as primary source materials. Although a few articles have appeared since then in various professional journals and popular magazines, the last significant contribution remains Conrad's work in 1943. While Sarah Bradford's two biographies illuminate some of Tubman's early life, they are deeply influenced by the social and religious proscriptions of the day. In an age of Jim Crow, Conrad's efforts to bring certain aspects of Tubman's life to the general public were thwarted time and time again by uninterested archivists, librarians, and publishers who found no value in the biography of a black woman. Written primarily through the agency of others, the narrative of Harriet Tubman has been reduced to a simple account of a courageous "mother of her race," rather than the complex story of an intelligent, crafty woman, with flaws and personal needs of her own, who transcended racial and gender barriers to achieve what very few men or women, black or white, have accomplished.

In elementary schools across America, young children learn of the heroic deeds of Tubman, just as they do the accomplishments of other noble historical characters such as Washington, Jefferson, Douglass, Truth and Lincoln. Relegated to the dustbin of history before the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, however, Tubman reemerged during the 1970s and 1980s as one of the top ten most famous Americans in history, right

after Betsy Ross (number one) and Paul Revere (number two).⁶ Harriet Tubman has become part of core American historical memory and beliefs. But, incredibly, what children learn about Tubman remains the sum total of what we, as a nation, adults and children alike, have come to know of her.

According to the biography so familiar to schoolchildren, Harriet “Araminta” or Minty Ross Tubman was born sometime between 1813 and 1823 in Bucktown, Dorchester County, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. As a young slave, Tubman was tragically injured when an irate overseer threw a stone weight at her head, inflicting a permanent disability that caused severe headaches and sudden “sleeping spells,” making her an unreliable and often unproductive enslaved worker. When her owner, Edward Brodess, died in 1849, Tubman discovered that she was about to be sold away from her family and friends. She ignored the advice of her free husband, John Tubman, to stay with him in Maryland and took steps to liberate herself. Trading a coveted quilt in return for help from a kindly, white Quaker woman who started her on the first leg of her journey, Tubman set out alone, following the North Star to freedom in Philadelphia. These school children can also proudly tell you that Tubman returned to the South nineteen times over the next ten years to liberate over 300 slaves, each time relying on an extensive and secretive network of dedicated Quakers and other anti-slavery activists. In honor of her triumphant pursuit of freedom for “her people,” Tubman earned the biblical name of Moses. Her remarkable success as a conductor on the Underground Railroad frustrated slave owners throughout the South. In spite of a \$40,000 reward for her capture, Tubman defied the best efforts of Southern slaveholders to re-enslave her. She bravely “rescued” her frail and aging parents, bringing them safely to freedom in Canada.

Serving the Union as a spy during the Civil War, Tubman conducted a secret armed raid in South Carolina against Confederate rebels. Before returning to her home in Auburn, New York, at the close of the war, Tubman provided valuable services as a nurse to hundreds of wounded soldiers. Tubman's devotion to helping oppressed and downtrodden African Americans elevated her status to a powerful, mythical mother figure.

This dissertation will examine some of the ways in which the mythical Tubman took shape; the greater question, however, of why our nation has been satisfied with a caricature of Harriet Tubman rather than a substantive critical look at her life will remain unanswered here. While the myth necessarily needs to be challenged, understanding where it has come from offers us an opportunity to re-examine the powerful interplay of race, religion, politics, gender, and class in the shaping of Tubman's biography.

But first, let me correct some of the myths: Tubman returned to the Eastern Shore approximately *eleven* times, not nineteen, to liberate family and friends, and, in all, there were about 70 or so former slaves whom she personally brought away over an 11-year period. Tubman herself only claimed to have made eight or nine trips and rescued approximately fifty people by the summer of 1859.⁷ Unfortunately, when Sarah Bradford published her first biography of Tubman in 1869, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*, she flagrantly exaggerated those numbers to 19 trips and 300 rescued. Perhaps hoping to dramatize Tubman's heroic feats, Bradford ultimately lost a great opportunity to reveal to the readers the more intimate details of Tubman's rescue missions. Though fewer in number, taken individually they are far more compelling and exciting than the inflated number of 300 nameless, faceless, and ultimately imaginary slaves seeking freedom

through Tubman's guidance. Tubman's monumental and dangerous efforts to bring away her family and friends should have been drama enough.

Another myth: a network of white Quakers was the foundation of Tubman's Underground Railroad activities. In fact, she relied heavily upon an intricate and secretive web of communication and support among African Americans, long established in the black community, to affect her rescues. The collective efforts of free and enslaved African Americans operating beyond the scrutiny of whites along the various routes to freedom were vital to her success.

Tubman also did not liberate her parents; they were free by the time Tubman came to "rescue" them in 1857. (Ben had been freed in 1840, and he purchased Rit from Eliza Brodess in 1855). There never was a \$40,000 reward for her capture, a figure that became grossly exaggerated through the retelling of her story – an exaggeration that comes not from Sarah Bradford initially, but from another white abolitionist, Sallie Holley. In reality, it was not until late 1857 and early 1858 that the slaveholders on the Eastern Shore became aware of the possibility of a "Moses," but, even then, they did not know the identity of the culprit, and whether that person was white or black. Most assumed it was a white abolitionist, sowing seeds of discontent in the homes of free blacks in the community, who in turn, inspired their enslaved brethren to run away. It is not clear that slaveholders on the Eastern Shore were ever aware of Tubman's identity.

In the late 1850's and throughout the Civil War a few favorable accounts of Tubman's exploits appeared in antislavery publications, and others in hostile pro-slavery newspapers. Her identity remained veiled, however, partly for protection from pro-slavery forces and partly due to the nature of her activities. She was constantly moving,

either in and out of the South ferrying fugitive slaves, traveling to meet privately with prominent antislavery activists in search of funds, or working odd jobs to support herself. Though she frequented antislavery rallies and lectures, she mostly remained a spectator. Unlike Sojourner Truth, the famous African American reformer, feminist, and former slave, she rarely spoke in public. Illiterate, Tubman relied on friends to read and write for her. This has also contributed to shifts in collective memory; in the absence of a written personal record we are left with accounts of her life that reflect a variety of racial, class and gender biases.

Though Franklin Sanborn and Ednah Cheney wrote earlier biographical sketches of Tubman, the idea for a more complete biographical sketch was hatched after the Civil war when Tubman was trying to support her extended family. Why Sarah Bradford was chosen to write Tubman's biography is unknown. Tubman's early narratives are most certainly highly modified and censored, revealing not only Tubman's voice, but also her voice according to Sanborn, Cheney and Bradford.⁸ While Sanborn's *Commonwealth* article remains an important biographical sketch of Tubman, as does Cheney's own sketch from the *Freedman's Record* in 1865, Bradford's interviews with Tubman, and the resulting narrative through Bradford's hand, are still a vital link to Tubman's history, in spite of its inaccuracies and mediation by Bradford. What Bradford recorded, though, still remains an important foundation from which historians can embark on a path to research and further discovery. Accepting this narrative as an historical document, rather than just a literary production, reveals its greater purpose; compelled by expectations (by the white community) of veracity, Bradford's text provides it. Though Bradford may

have been confused by some of Tubman's stories, and therefore recorded them incorrectly, she does give us a remarkable view into Tubman's early life

Tubman's narrative reveals twin themes of resistance and liberation, identifiable conventions that the predominantly white audience had come to expect and understand from black memoirs during the nineteenth century. Yet, Tubman's tale of a physical and spiritual struggle against violence and oppression has resonated with audiences for one-hundred and fifty years. Her narrative has come mostly to us as a mediated text, and we may never know the true extent of Bradford's and other biographers' intrusion into the narrative, nor their editorial decisions that kept certain stories from being revealed. We may also never know how selective and creative Tubman was, how she chose to present her own life story for public consumption.

In 1907, an article about Harriet's life appeared in the *New York Herald*. "There is not a trace in her countenance of intelligence or courage, but seldom has there been placed in any woman's hide a soul moved by a higher impulse, a purer benevolence, a more dauntless resolution, a more passionate love of freedom. This poor, ignorant, common looking black woman was fully capable of acting the part of Joan d'Arc." This "poor, ignorant, common looking" imagery belies Tubman's intellectual development and her evolving confidence in her own abilities, and it demonstrates a failure to grasp the substance of Tubman. While enslavement itself was certainly motivation enough for Tubman to seek freedom, this answer does not illuminate, but rather negates the possibility of a rich and productive intellectual and spiritual life. Written primarily through the agency of others, the narrative of Harriet Tubman has come to symbolize her as the "mother of her race," endowed with a "natural benevolence" derived from a

“higher impulse.” This not only complicates the way we think about her as a person, but also is a reflection of the limited potential identities available to black women as historical actors.

In the years following Tubman’s death in 1913, the black community maintained Tubman’s memory, mostly in segregated classrooms. Here, her narrative became part of a usable past for African Americans, where her story, shortened and simplified entered the pantheon of black achievers. Highly fictionalized accounts of her life started appearing in the late 1920s and early 1930s, specifically young adult and juvenile works which sought to catch the wave of renewed interest in the Underground Railroad sweeping the nation at that time.⁹ Once again, Tubman was appropriated as a “malleable icon,” as David Blight calls her, suitable for consumption by a variety of audiences.¹⁰

Earl Conrad, a former teamster union organizer in Harlem, a communist sympathizer, and New York correspondent for the *Chicago Defender*, began researching a full-length biography of Tubman in 1938. Conrad’s work is remarkably well researched and documented. Fortunate to interview individuals who knew Tubman when she was alive, Conrad documented many lost and forgotten stories of Tubman’s life. But he was hindered by the lack of manuscript and archival material relating to Tubman, much of which had not been deposited in libraries and archives at that time. He perpetuated some of Bradford’s exaggerations, however, repeating the erroneous numbers of trips to the South and slaves rescued, in addition to several other myths.

Conrad’s book met with limited success, but more importantly it laid the foundation for juvenile biographies of Tubman that emerged during the 1950s and 1960s, securing Tubman’s place in the pantheon of American heroines, first as a black hero and then,

later, as a feminist. The 1960s brought renewed attention to black history and historical figures, and by the 1980s her life story had become a staple of mainstream juvenile literature. However, racial and gender proscriptions have contributed to past shifts in collective memory, thus muting and reconfiguring Tubman's life story in the service of prevailing agendas, redefining her place as an historical actor. This has contributed to the perpetuation of the mythical, and thereby limited, memory of Harriet Tubman. Though the myth has served the varied cultural needs of black and white Americans over time, the obscurity in which the details of her life remain is a deeply troubling. How did this mythology take root, and why has Tubman's biography remained the provenance of children's literature? I hope this biography, based on new information and fresh sources, will bring to life a more real Harriet Tubman, and help answer some of these questions.

Born enslaved, Harriet Tubman had experienced first hand many of the terrors of slavery. Disabled the majority of her life, she overcame almost insurmountable obstacles to fulfill her dreams of freedom for herself and others. She died a free woman, surrounded by family and friends in the home for aged African Americans she had dreamed of for decades. Her legendary courage and exploits on the Underground Railroad, her unparalleled activities as a woman spy, and her renowned nursing services during the Civil War, were part of a lifelong commitment to the struggle for liberty, equality, and justice for herself, her family and community. Although she did not live long enough to witness the granting of the vote to women, Harriet Tubman's role as an ardent suffragist and political activist fighting for the rights of African Americans, has inspired generations of Americans who have been deeply moved by her lifelong quest for self-determination and freedom from oppression. This biography will not change that

image, which inspires such admiration, but, rather, will reveal some of long forgotten details of her life, and the influences and motivations that guided and shaped her, creating, ultimately a female “Moses.”

CHAPTER NOTES

¹ Franklin Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, July 17, 1863.

² Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman."

³ Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney, "Moses," *Freedmen's Record*, March 1865.

⁴ Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869).; and William Still, The Underground Railroad. (1871; Reprint, Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1970).

⁵ Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Sons, 1886); Bradford, Scenes. Earl Conrad, Harriet Tubman. (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1943).

⁶ Michael Frisch, "American History and the Structures of Collective Memory: A Modest Exercise in Empirical Iconography," *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 4 March, (1989): 1139.

⁷ Numerous accounts of her speeches during the summer of 1859, in addition to private letters written by friends and associates at the time, reveal the consistency of these numbers. Tubman did make at least two more trips between the summer of 1859 and the end of 1860. See, for instance, "Letter, Franklin Sanborn to Friend [Thomas W. Higginson]." Anti-Slavery Collection. Ms.E.5.1 . 53 pt. 1. Boston Public Library. Boston.; "Letter, Lucy Osgood to Lydia Maria Child, June 2, 1859." Lydia Maria Child Papers. Anti-Slavery Collection Microform. Card #1110, Cornell University Libraries. Ithaca, NY..

⁸ James McGowan, "Harriet Tubman: According to Sarah Bradford," *Harriet Tubman Journal* Vol. 2,, no. 1, January, (1994):

⁹ David W. Blight, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). 231-237.

¹⁰ Blight, Race. 332

CHAPTER I

LIFE ON THE CHESAPEAKE IN BLACK AND WHITE

When Harriet Tubman fled from her dead master's family in 1849, she was not the only slave from the Eastern Shore of Maryland racing for liberty. In 1850, 279 runaway slaves earned Maryland the dubious distinction of leading the slave states in successfully executed escapes.¹ The motivations for running away are no mystery; in many cases the methods, however, remain so even to this day. Despite stepped-up efforts in Maryland and other Southern states to thwart escapes during the ten years before the Civil War, some slaves did marshal the strength and courage to take their liberty. Few returned, however, to the land of their enslavers, risking capture and re-enslavement, or even lynching to help others seek their own emancipation. How did Tubman successfully escape bondage in Dorchester County, and how did she manage to return numerous times to lead out family and friends? Not merely the recipient of secret white abolitionist support in Maryland, Tubman, was the beneficiary of, and a participant in, a highly evolved African American community whose network challenged the control of white Marylanders, from the earliest Africans brought from Africa to the outbreak of the Civil War. To understand Tubman's story, one must begin several decades before her birth and examine the complicated set of interrelationships, black and white, enslaved and free, of several generations of white and black families living on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. As historian Mechal Sobel puts it, this was a "world they made together."²

Very little is known of the background of Harriet Tubman's family. A devastating fire at the Dorchester County Court House, set by an unknown arsonist in May of 1852, destroyed a great portion of Dorchester County's historical records. Few records survived, and those were supplemented by copies, requested at the time by local white officials seeking to re-establish record keeping. Most of these included the re-recording of wills, land transactions, and various other deeds and sales records. Several documents did survive the fire; the records of the Orphans Court, 1847-1852, were saved when the clerk of the court brought the log book home to work on it over the weekend, thus saving a five year segment of history vitally important to uncovering details of Tubman's life and of those black and white families who were part of her community. Other records were saved, too; the record books detailing and recording manumissions, freedom papers, and many chattel records were also preserved, giving us important information about the free black community and providing vital genealogical information for many black families in the area. District Court cases, heard at the Appeals Court located in neighboring Talbot County, were recorded at the state level, as were most land transactions, thereby preserving some colonial and early republic records. But the majority of Dorchester County assessment and court records, including wills, trial, tax, and court proceedings, from colonial times to 1852 were lost forever. Without early assessment records we cannot trace the ownership patterns of most enslaved people in Dorchester County. Because no such tax lists exist before 1852, we do not know the names of the slaves owned by Edward Brodess, Harriet Tubman's owner, nor all of those owned by Anthony Thompson, the owner of Tubman's father, Ben Ross, during early years of enslavement. We cannot trace with accuracy where Harriet's grandparents and

great grandparents came from or by whom they were enslaved. And no white families have come forward with historical documents linking them to Tubman's family.

The documents that do survive, in combination with historical scholarship on African American family life under slavery and in freedom, histories of the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and extensive genealogical research into both black and white families, provide a strong foundation upon which to build a vivid picture of Tubman's life in Dorchester County. Consequently, the lives of the white families who enslaved Tubman, her family and her friends, highlight in sharp relief the contrasting lives whites and blacks lived, intimately entwined yet irreconcilably different. Nothing in white life, no matter how poor or disfranchised, could compare to life in slavery.

Slavery, and the laws and regulations that codified its existence, in the new colonies evolved slowly over a hundred-year period. Until the early eighteenth century, particularly on the Eastern Shore, white indentured servitude was common, and some planters had both slaves and indentured servants; by the 1730s and 40s, however, shipments of black captives from Africa to the Americas had increased dramatically. Copious laws were enacted to standardize ownership of slaves, including those that specified any children born to an enslaved mother would carry the status of the mother, with ownership remaining with the slave mother's owner, even if the father was a free black or a white man.³

Thus, Tubman's story begins with the history of some of the white families who claimed ownership of her and her family. By following these white families' lives, as closely as the remaining records allow, the shadow lives of their enslaved people emerges, bringing to life the web of community to which Tubman was born.

The Pattisons, the Thompson's, and the Brodesses played key roles in the lives of the Tubman's family. On the Eastern Shore, the specific pattern of migration and movement of black people, slave and free alike, was reflected in the land ownership patterns, occupational choices, and living arrangements of the region's white families, revealing a wide geographic area throughout which many black families maintained familial and community ties. Family separations were not always precipitated by sale; some whites owned (or rented) land and farms across great distances, requiring a shifting of their enslaved and hired black labor force at varying times throughout the year, or at various times over a period of decades when new land had been purchased and the cycle of clearing and establishing new farms began. This pattern of intra-regional movement forced families and friends (both black and white) to create communication and travel networks that enabled them to maintain ties to family and community. Tubman's personal circumstances made her unique, but these networks of community made it possible for her to become one of the few individuals capable of executing such successful, and yes daring, rescues repeatedly, during the most hotly contested eras of American Slavery.

Born in Dorchester County, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, probably in March 1822, Harriet "Araminta" Ross Tubman was one of possibly nine children of Harriet "Rit" Green and Benjamin Ross.⁴ Tubman and her siblings spent their childhood and early adulthood in and around the small agricultural crossroads, or village, known as Bucktown, which is bordered by the Blackwater and Little Blackwater rivers, a vast area of marshes, swamps, and low lying farmlands.⁵ Dorchester County lies between two rivers, the Choptank to the north and the Nanticoke to the south and east, extending from

Chesapeake Bay to the Delaware state line and encompassing almost 400,000 acres of dense forest full of oak, hickory, pine, walnut, and sweet gum, of marshes and waterways, and of cleared farm land. Numerous navigable rivers and creeks intersect the county, offering access to trade and suitable sites for shipbuilding. The flat terrain provides for abundant tillable lands for tobacco, at first, then wheat, corn, fruit and other agricultural products, and, before modern times, the seemingly infinite supply of oyster shells helped keep soils fertile. The Choptank River rises to the northeast, near the Delaware line, flowing south through Caroline and Talbot counties where it is joined by Tuckahoe Creek, and on to Dorchester County, finally emptying into the Chesapeake, creating a significant and abundant estuary. In the nineteenth century, the river remained navigable for nearly forty miles from its confluence at the Chesapeake Bay.⁶

Dorchester's southern border, the Nanticoke River, is a large stream, also rising from Delaware, flowing southwest and entering Maryland just north of the point it meets Marshy Hope Creek. The Nanticoke was navigable throughout its course from Seaford, Delaware to the Chesapeake; the town of Vienna served as its port of entry, becoming a major trading center during the early nineteenth century, providing Bay access to neighboring Somerset County, and southwestern Delaware.⁷

The Nanticoke derives its name from that of the Native people who populated the Eastern Shore when white Europeans landed here in the early seventeenth century. By the mid eighteenth century, most Native Nanticokes had died off as a result of disease and conflict with white settlers, and most of the survivors had been turned out of their land or sold whatever rights they claimed to the land and moved west. Some Nanticokes

and Blacks, free and enslaved, inter-married, creating a marginalized, yet distinct creole community in Dorchester County that persisted into the nineteenth century.⁸

Bucktown sits just west of the Transquaking River in central Dorchester County, twelve miles south of Cambridge, the county seat, bordering Greenbrier Swamp on the edges of the Black Water River as it flows into Fishing Bay. Edward Brodess, Tubman's owner, was a small planter who had inherited his father's ancestral property on Greenbrier Road in Bucktown, when he reached the age of maturity in 1822. By the time Tubman was born, Rit, her mother, had already been passed down through several generations of the Pattison family under a series of inheritance bequests, like a chest of drawers or a coveted piece of jewelry. Ultimately the property of Edward Brodess as a collateral member of the Pattison family, Rit and her children became Edward's personal property when he became an adult.

Ben Ross was a timber inspector and foreman, owned by Anthony Thompson who was a moderately successful landowner with interests in a variety of businesses on the Eastern Shore). In 1803, Thompson married Edward Brodess's mother, Mary Pattison Brodess. Through this marriage, Rit and Ben became members of the same household, eventually marrying and starting their own family around 1808.⁹

Sometime during the late 1840s, Tubman hired a local Cambridge, Maryland, lawyer. Acting on information conveyed by her mother, perhaps, or another member of the slave community, or a disgruntled heir to a long dissipated inheritance, Harriet had become convinced that her mother, Rit, and the rest of her family were, in fact, legally free. With money earned by hiring out her time, Tubman paid the lawyer to track down the will of Atthow Pattison, Rit's first owner and the owner of Modesty, Rit's mother.

Written in 1791, and probated in 1797 when Pattison died, the will devised multiple acres of Dorchester County land, livestock, furniture and slaves to his surviving children and grandchildren. According to Sarah Bradford, Tubman's first biographer, Harriet soon discovered that the complex legal codes that defined, organized and administered the regime of slavery and freedom for Maryland's Blacks were too imprecise and unclear to offer much hope for freedom. She told Bradford in 1868,

‘Twenty-three years ago, in Maryland, I paid a lawyer \$5 to look up the will of my mother's first master. He looked back sixty years, and said it was time to give up. I told him to go back furdur.’ He went back sixty-five years, and there he found the will—giving the girl Ritty to his grand-daughter (Mary Patterson), to serve her and her offspring till she was forty-five years of age. This grand-daughter died soon after, unmarried; and as there was no provision for Ritty, in case of her death, she was actually emancipated at that time. But no one informed her of the fact, and she and her dear children remained in bondage till emancipated by the courage and determination of this heroic daughter and sister.¹⁰

In 1791, Atthow Pattison, the patriarch of a long established Eastern Shore family, sat down to contemplate his legacy to his children and grandchildren. A Revolutionary War veteran, a modest farmer and even more modest slaveholder, Pattison could proudly trace his roots in Dorchester County back at least a century. Intermarrying for generations, the Pattisons and other Eastern Shore families successfully solidified their control over vast tracts of dense timberland, rich marshlands, and productive farms. Standing at his front door, Pattison could view much of his approximately 265-acre farm, which sat upon the east side of the Little Blackwater River, near its confluence with the larger Blackwater River.¹¹ From the wharf in front of his home, Pattison probably shipped tobacco, timber and grain, to England and other markets, and received in turn goods from the West Indies, England, and other trading points along the Chesapeake. Though tobacco production on the Eastern Shore was witnessing a permanent decline in

favor of grain, fruit and timber production, tobacco was still often used as currency much like cash. Though of relatively poor quality compared to sweeter Virginian tobacco, “sot weed,” as it was called, was a major export cash crop for some Eastern Shore planters. Pattison, in fact, depended upon the continued production of tobacco on his lands to provide for annual payments to several of his heirs after his death. After devising various tracts of land, his home plantation, and arranging for payments to his grandchildren when they came of age, Atthow bequeathed his remaining slaves and livestock to his surviving daughter, Elizabeth and her children Gourney Crow, James, Elizabeth, Acsah, and Mary Pattison, and his son-in-law, Ezekiel Keene and his children, Samuel and Anna Keene. Elizabeth, in keeping with her father’s implicit understanding that his children marry “in the family,”¹² had married her cousin William Pattison, and they lived on a nearby plantation. Atthow’s second daughter, Mary, had also married a cousin, Ezekiel Keene, though it appears that she may have already died at the time the will was written. The Keenes lived on a farm south of Atthow Pattison’s land, creating for Pattison a rather large extended familial estate over which he presided, figuratively if not in reality.

When Atthow Pattison died in January 1797, he gave to his “granddaughter Mary Pattison one Negro girl called Rittia and her increase until she and they arrive to forty five years of age.”¹³ This phrase, limiting Rittia’s and her offspring’s terms of service to forty-five years, would create controversy and confusion for Harriet Tubman and her family, the Brodesses who claimed them as their property, and the Pattisons who, in turn, claimed them as their property based on their understanding of Atthow Pattison’s intent. This will became the foundation for a contentious court battle during the 1850s, one that, thankfully for historians, created a lengthy court record that still exists in the Dorchester

County Court House.¹⁴ This court record remains one of the most important pieces of evidence providing clues as to Tubman's ancestry and her family's status under slavery. Though Tubman's memory was off by several years about the dates of the will, she was not mistaken as to the overall contents. The real possibility that her mother may have been entitled to her freedom was not the wishful thinking of a naïve slave.

On first glance, the will did explicitly state that Rit was to serve Mary Pattison until she reached the age of forty-five, and that Rit's children would do likewise. What Tubman did not realize, and perhaps the lawyer whom she hired could not have easily explained for her, was that Atthow Pattison had neglected to stipulate exactly what was to become of Rit and her children when she and they reached the age of forty five. Manumissions in Maryland had always taken place, even in the earliest days of slavery in the 17th and 18th centuries. Never an informal procedure, manumissions were taken quite seriously and were often recorded in land records (as deeds) for each county. Some slaves were able to earn enough money to buy their own freedom, and on occasion slaves sued for their freedom, some eventually prevailing. In 1752, however, Maryland passed its first laws attendant to the issue of manumissions, specifically by will. Manumissions were restricted to slaves "sound in body and mind, capable of labor and not over fifty years of age," so as to prevent slaveholders or estates from avoiding responsibility for the care and maintenance of "disabled and superannuated slaves." Manumitting slaves was illegal if the grant of manumission was written in part "during the last fatal illness of the master," or if the freeing of slaves affected the ability of creditors to settle their claims against the estate of the deceased.¹⁵ This legislation, it was hoped, would slow the

increasing number of deathbed manumissions and hold slaveholders more accountable for the support and maintenance of indigent slaves.

Limiting Rit's term of service lowered her market value to Pattison's heirs if they were inclined to sell her after gaining possession of her. No doubt Pattison was aware of this, but he may have been influenced by a number of factors. On the Eastern Shore, like elsewhere in the new nation, a complex movement was emerging, both religious and secular, that spurred a marked increase in manumissions during the 1790s. While elite families still maintained much control, newfound wealth could be achieved readily with the expanding production of wheat and other grains for export markets, providing viable roads to prosperity for entrepreneurial families in Dorchester and the surrounding counties. The rise of intensive grain agriculture and timber harvesting transformed work patterns on the Eastern Shore. Tobacco production required a year round labor force, but grain agriculture did not. While timber harvesting could be carried on throughout the year, it also required continuous acquisition of land once one area had been harvested over, and it required a predominantly male labor force. These factors, among others, altered the nature of black slavery and freedom on the Eastern Shore by 1800.¹⁶

An increasingly important religious awakening founded upon Quakerism and Methodism and the legacy of the Revolution, both sparked intense debate about the moral, political and economic validity of slavery. While the marked rise in manumissions and petitions for freedom immediately following the American Revolution was, in part, a function of the Revolution's rhetoric of liberty, it was also a function of fluctuating economic conditions, less labor-intensive agricultural work, and a self-sustaining and economically viable free African-American population, which made term

limits and manumissions more palatable to slaveholders as an alternative to perpetual bondage. An increasingly vocal anti-slavery sentiment on England also sparked intense debate in Maryland. Citizens from the Eastern Shore, including those from Talbot, Dorchester and Caroline counties, petitioned the House of Delegates in 1785 for the abolition of slavery. Abolitionist voices throughout Maryland became quite influential; so much so that increasing numbers of slaves were successful in their freedom suits against their masters. Outraged, slaveholders forced the House and Senate to impose sanctions against the Maryland Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, effectively dismantling it by the mid 1790s.¹⁷ On the Eastern Shore, however, Quakers manumitted hundreds of slaves by deed and by will in the 1780s. Methodism evolved slowly in Maryland, but during the 1790s it spread rapidly throughout Dorchester and the surrounding counties. Though the most elite families of the Eastern Shore initially remained loyal to the Anglican Church, Methodism played an important role in the increasing number of manumissions. But elite slaveholder concerns about the growing free black population became a powerful counterpoint to rising anti-slavery sentiment on the Eastern Shore. Many Whites were increasingly concerned about their ability to control the economic, political and social dynamics in their communities. While immediate emancipation remained a choice for some Methodists (and some non-Methodist slaveholders), it appears that the majority who chose to consider manumission for their enslaved people followed a policy of delayed manumissions, executing deeds of manumission for some future date, ensuring for the most part that the slaveholder remained the beneficiary of a slave's most productive years. Others sold their slaves for a limited term of years; putting cash in their own pockets while assuaging their

consciences by providing for eventual manumission, which in all cases of delayed manumission “afforded the greatest amount of protection for the master’s purse while still appeasing the troubled conscience.”¹⁸

The Abolition Society argued in the 1780s that restrictions on the ability of a slaveholder to manumit his slaves (as defined in the 1752 law) was in direct conflict with the “wish of every free community,” conflicting with the rights of free individuals to control their property, regardless of whether it was a slave or a piece of land.¹⁹ During the 1780s, the question of limits on deeds of manumission was debated at yearly meetings of the Society of Friends, at the General Court, and finally before the House of Delegates in Maryland. After several defeats in the Maryland Senate, a revised bill was passed in 1790, allowing for “manumission freely by deed, properly executed, as before [per the 1752 law], or by will at any time, saving only the rights of creditors, and provided that the slave be not over fifty years and be able to work, at the time he was to be free.”²⁰ In 1796, the law was amended to restrict manumissions to those slaves forty-five years of age or younger.²¹

Historian Stephan Whitman has argued that by limiting a slave’s term of service, some masters were seeking a compromise, and a measure of loyalty from their enslaved people. Term limits also, Whitman suggests, “harmonized with masters’ desires to regard slavery as becoming progressively ameliorated in keeping with America’s republican and Christian ideals.”²² This attitude was not, however, incompatible with a belief that slavery could remain intact and be perpetuated. For many slaves, term slavery was the road to autonomy on the journey to freedom, where they would eventually join the already growing free and freeborn black population.

It would appear, then, that Pattison's intention may have been to manumit those slaves specifically devised in his last will and testament of 1791 once they had completed their term of bondage at the relatively advanced age of forty-five years, years sooner than the maximum allowed under the 1790 law. When Pattison died in 1797, the wording of his will still met the requirements of the amended law of 1796, apparently securing the manumission of Rit and her children when they reached the age of forty-five. However, because Pattison did not specifically say what his wishes were with respect to these slaves once they reached forty-five, the intent of the will remained legally ambiguous. As we shall see in a later chapter, this oversight on the part of Pattison (or his lawyer) would leave the issue of liberty for Rit and her children, including Tubman, in legal limbo, even if his *intention* was that they be free once they attained the age of forty-five.

Born sometime around 1789, Rittia grew up in the Pattison household probably with her mother Modesty and other close kin. According to the Maryland's colonial census, taken in 1776, Atthow Pattison owned five slaves.²³ As for most slaves held by Marylanders at the time, their names were rarely recorded: in the census, slaves were considered chattel, much like sheep, cattle and horses. According to the 1790 census, Pattison's household consisted of 12 individuals, 5 Whites and 7 slaves.²⁴ Again, the names of these slaves are unknown. The higher number could reflect the birth of additional slave children to the enslaved women in Pattison's household. While Modesty is not mentioned in Atthow Pattison's will of 1791, she was at one time owned by Pattison and may have been one of the seven slaves listed in 1790. Modesty was known in the community, however, so her existence is without question. Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, Anthony Thompson's son, who was a little boy when Mary Pattison Brodess

married his father and brought Rit to their household, later recalled that “he knew Modesty, the mother of Rit and she belonged to Elizabeth Pattison [Mary Pattison’s mother].”²⁵ Ezekiel Keene, Pattison’s son-in-law, owned 10 slaves in 1790, some of whom may have come with Mary Pattison, Atthow Pattison’s daughter, as part of her dowry. Atthow Pattison assigned ownership of three other slaves through his will. “Minty” was bequeathed to Pattison’s grandson, Samuel Keene, “until she and [her increase] arrive at forty five years of age, using them kindly.” To his granddaughter Elizabeth Pattison, he bequeathed “one Negro woman named Bess till she arrives to the age of forty five years of age to be her housemaid, and her children until they arrive to the same age, also one Negro woman named Suke until she and they arrive to forty five years of age.”²⁶ These enslaved women were more than likely part of a family grouping of their own. As a child, Tubman had been given the name Araminta and was called “Minty.” It would seem plausible that Rit might have named one of her daughters after a favorite aunt, perhaps the sister of her mother. At the least, she named her child “Minty” after a woman for whom she may have shared familial affection.²⁷ Atthow Pattison’s slave, “Minty,” on the other hand, was sold or mortgaged by Samuel Keene in 1809 to his cousin, also named Samuel Keene, son of Henry Keene. Samuel also sold a child named “Ritty” when he sold Minty.²⁸ The naming patterns strongly suggest, then, that this slave woman Minty was indeed related to Harriet Tubman’s mother Rit, perhaps an aunt or a sister.

This accounts for only four of the seven slaves noted in the 1790 census. No male slaves are mentioned in Pattison’s will. Since he owned a large plantation, it seems implausible that he would not have any male slaves. There are several possibilities to

explain this omission. Pattison could have hired any number of free or enslaved Blacks, or white laborers, to work his land. In fact, three of the slaves listed in 1790 census record may not have been owned by Pattison, but rather hired by him. Because they lived in his household (or on his land) they would have been counted by the census taker when he made his rounds about the neighborhood. Another possibility is that Pattison had already transferred ownership of these additional slaves to his children by the time the will was written.²⁹ Or the answer may actually be a combination of the above: Pattison may have transferred ownership of some of his slaves, including his male slaves, to his children at a much earlier date and hired them back when they were needed. This may have been a means to help his children and their spouses establish their own farms, or to help them farm Pattison's extensive acreage with the expectation of sharing in the plantation profits or for future inheritance.

Atthow Pattison's granddaughter, Mary Pattison the heir to Rittia, married Joseph Brodess, a local farmer living in the Bucktown area, in 1800. Brodess, and his siblings, Edward and Elizabeth, had inherited several hundred acres in Bucktown from their father, Edward Brodess, Sr., who had died in 1796. According to the census records for 1800, however, Joseph Brodess is listed either on or next to the plantation of his mother-in-law, Elizabeth Pattison, south of the Little Black Water Bridge. Listed as a separate household, Mary and Joseph had no children but did have five slaves, one of whom, presumably, was Rit. Elizabeth Pattison, a widow in 1800, was the head of a rather large household of fifteen white and black people, including seven slaves. Brodess, it seems, was living on land owned by his mother-in-law, perhaps helping her manage the property. His own property, north and slightly east at Bucktown, had not been developed

yet, or his family was farming the land for him. The tract of land he inherited from his father did not contain the family homestead; that piece of property was devised to his older brother and heir apparent, Edward.³⁰ Indeed, given such a large household, including four to six minor white children and no adult white males, it would appear that Elizabeth might have needed her son-in-law's assistance.

Mary Pattison Brodess gave birth to a son, Edward Brodess, on June 14, 1801. Sometime after June 1802, Joseph Brodess died, leaving Mary a young widow.³¹ By 1803, Mary had married another local landholder, Anthony Thompson. Mary's rapid remarriage represented the realities of life for women in the early republic. In need of support, possessing some limited wealth of her own, and the custodian of her infant son's inheritance, Mary sought to secure her future and that of her son by marrying within the community to a man of equal or better social and financial standing. A woman's right to her own inheritance or to that of her dead husband was circumscribed by laws that limited her ability to control and own property outright. Joseph may have acquired little wealth by the time he died at a young age. Though Mary entered the marriage with at least one slave (Rittia), and perhaps some yearly income from the residue of her grandfather's estate, she was more than likely not secure enough to maintain herself and her son independently.

Anthony Thompson had also been widowed at the same time. A descendent of early Dorchester County settlers, Thompson inherited his plantation in the 1780s; it sat near the Little Black Water River in Central Dorchester County and had, over the years, added considerably to his own land holdings in the area.³² Thompson is listed in the 1800 census for Church Creek with his wife, Polly (Mary) King and their children, Edward,

Anthony and Absalom Thompson, who were all under the age of fifteen. Added to this household were nine slaves and one free black. A widow by 1803, he did not have to look far a field to remarry. Thompson's wealth at that time exceeded that of Joseph Brodess's.

It was to this household that Mary Pattison Brodess brought her young son, Edward in 1803, bringing with her Rittia, Harriet Tubman's mother. Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, Anthony Thompson's son, would later recall that he knew Rit "since he... was 11 years of age [ca. 1803], when he first knew her she was claimed by his mother-in-law [step-mother] whose maiden name was Mary Pattison...."³³ Mary Pattison Brodess also brought with her four other slaves who had belonged to Joseph Brodess. As Thompson would later testify, "Mary Pattison claimed the said girl Rit as coming from the Pattison estate, the other Negroes which she had, she got from Brodes [sic], ... Rit was the only female servant that Mary Pattison had when his father married her. The negroes belonging to Brodess' estate, and whose widow deponent's father [Anthony Thompson, Sr.] married, were held in common and no division took place between the widow and his son [Edward Brodess], until after he arrived at Twenty-one years of age."³⁴

When the 1810 census was taken, Thompson had 15 slaves, six more than he had in 1800. These additional slaves *could* be Rit, the four male slaves, and perhaps Rit's young daughter, Linah who was born probably around 1808.³⁵ Although it is unclear as to how Anthony Thompson came to own Ben Ross, Ben may have had extensive kin relationships with both free and enslaved blacks in the immediate area.³⁶ There is little doubt, however, that the marriage of Mary Pattison Brodess to Anthony Thompson precipitated the meeting and subsequent marriage of Ben and Rit.

Where Pattison and Thompson may have acquired their slaves in the first place is not known, but historical records reveal an active slave trade from Africa to the Chesapeake during the mid 18th century, disembarking over 18,000 slaves onto Maryland soil.³⁷ In 1863, Franklin Sanborn published the first known biography of Harriet Tubman, in the antislavery newspaper, *The Commonwealth*. According to Sanborn, Harriet was “the grand-daughter of a slave imported from Africa, and has not a drop of white blood in her veins.”³⁸ In a later interview, Franklin Sanborn wrote that Tubman told him “the old mammies to whom she told [her] dreams were wont to nod knowingly and say, ‘I reckon youse one o’ dem ‘Shantees’, chile.’ For they knew the tradition of the unconquerable Ashantee blood, which in a slave made him a thorn in the side of the planter or cane grower whose property he became, so that few of that race were in bondage.”³⁹ Though little has come to light about any of Tubman’s grandparents, it has been generally assumed at least one if not more came directly from Africa. Rit was known as Harriet “Rit” or “Rittia” Green, and so has usually been assumed that her father’s surname was Green, though we cannot be sure.⁴⁰ One interviewer wrote in that Tubman “knows that her mother’s mother was brought in a slave ship from Africa, that her mother was the daughter of a white man, an American, and her father, a full blooded Negro.”⁴¹ Rit’s mother, Modesty, is the only person noted in the historical record as being one of Tubman’s grandparents.⁴² Ben Ross’s parentage remains unknown, though there is evidence of possible siblings and other relatives living in the county, both free and enslaved.

Analysis of the slave trade in the Chesapeake during the 18th century offers some clues as to Tubman’s African heritage. Modesty, or any one of Tubman’s other black

grandparents, may have been taken as children sometime during the mid- 1700s while living on the West African Gold Coast, in the region now known as the Republic of Ghana populated by Asante tribes. Though “prone to revolt,” the Asante were highly prized by slaveholders in Maryland and Virginia because of their strong physical ability and flexibility in performing different work tasks.⁴³ Most likely sold directly from the deck of a slave ship somewhere along the Chesapeake Bay, or at the 18th century slave market in Oxford across the Choptank River from Cambridge, Maryland, these slaves eventually settled with the expanding planter families clearing and managing property in Dorchester County. As a loosely defined coalition of small tribal states, the Asante defended themselves against British colonial rule far longer than most African states, finally succumbing to defeat in 1896. They did not succeed, however, in protecting themselves from capture and enslavement, in the Americas. Years of conflict between the Asante and their neighbors offered a steady supply of Akan, Fante, Asante, and other Gold Coast captives who were sold as slaves to New World markets.⁴⁴ Most of these captives belonged to a variety of common “Akan linguistic subgroups.”⁴⁵

Though gold was an enormously important trade commodity, the Asante economies, according to Michael Gomez, “were... agriculturally based,” with a highly spiritual culture that believed in the sacredness of land and water, Asante society was rooted in the power of “great ancestresses,” and was noted for the roles its women played as advisors and leaders in the community. According to Asante lore, these ancestresses “came from either the sky or the earth to the forests,” enabling the transition of the Asante people from hunter-gatherers living in the forests to farmers, living in established villages and towns throughout the region. Asante peoples became adept at clearing densely forested

land for small farms, establishing specific timetables for alternating fallow and production, and were keenly aware of the need to protect the newly cleared land from the disastrous effects of soil erosion, particularly near rivers and streams. European observers noted the well-ordered and fenced farms of the Asante producing abundant crops of yams, corn, nuts, cassava, and plantains. It was, perhaps, these skills associated with forest clearing and productive agriculture that made the Asante and the affiliated peoples of present day Ghana so attractive as slave labor on the Eastern Shore.⁴⁶ As Michael Gomez pointing out that the “need to “carve out” cultivable land from the forest, created in “Asante thought and practice a deeply powerful social imperative towards the historical realization of an aggregated cluster of norms and values: fruitfulness, increase, maximization, abundance.” New World planters may have very well detected this “principle of accumulation” among the Akan, thus explaining their reputation as hard workers.”⁴⁷

Like other West and West Central African peoples, the Asante believed in a variety of deities linked to both the natural and spiritual worlds. The most powerful were associated with bodies of water, but the land, or mother earth, was the link between the dead and the living, and

the source of not only sustenance and values but also corporate identity. It was where one’s ancestors were buried and continued to live in another dimension, and to whom one could go in time of need. Displacement was therefore a traumatic, personality-altering experience, especially as it terminated in a sugar cane or tobacco field on the other side of the world... [T]he welfare of the community transcended that of the individual, so that while individual achievement was encouraged, ‘the notion that something is ‘for me’ is meaningless unless it is linked with the total idea that it is ‘for us’. This is the cardinal principle of Akan communal life.’⁴⁸

The commonality of these beliefs in the West African region supports the view that, with the forced removal of enslaved peoples from this region to the Chesapeake, such cultural traditions may have persisted far longer than has previously been expressed. Enslaved Africans from the Gold Coast “brought an acute understanding of the role and significance of land with them to the New World. They were among those who saw the need for a connection both tangible and spiritual.”⁴⁹ It was long believed that cultural retention was nearly impossible due to significant cultural mixing among Africans during the Middle Passage, leaving little opportunity for maintaining an ethnic or cultural identity once established on the plantation. Recent research, however, is challenging long held assumptions that slaves brought to the New World were distributed randomly, thus eliminating any opportunity for ethnically similar peoples to create communities in the New World.⁵⁰ This research reveals that London traders brought the majority of African slaves to Maryland, and of those, the majority came from the Gold Coast and Upper Guinea, “where most London slavers concentrated their trade.”⁵¹ This may have worked well for planters in the long run. Contrary to earlier scholarship, planters may have wanted slaves with similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This may have ensured more congenial work groups, and eased the transition for frightened and angry new slaves.⁵² In addition, it is likely that once a slaver arrived in the Chesapeake and began selling slaves on the Eastern Shore, several buyers from the same area would buy slaves at the same time, thus increasing the possibility that slaves could have culturally similar peoples nearby, if not on the same plantation.

As the planter class expanded on the Eastern Shore throughout the 18th century, slave ships plied their trade on both sides of the Chesapeake, in ports such as Cambridge,

Oxford, and St. Michaels, in addition to selling slaves directly to plantation owners on their own docks along the rivers and bays. By the 1740s, enslaved African labor had become the dominant labor resource for the expanding agricultural and timber economy of the Chesapeake. Known slave imports rose steadily in Maryland between 1720 and 1770, culminating in over 5,300 slaves disembarking during the decade prior to the Revolution.⁵³ After banning slave imports in 1783, Maryland relied more and more in intra-regional trading, smuggling, and the natural increase of the slaves themselves to increase its slave labor force. But African cultural practices surely persisted, as evidenced by such names as Ibo, Mingo, Winnebar, Sinta, Suke, and Binah in the census records, and descriptions in manumission records that include such identifying characteristics as “has holes in his ears for bobs,” and “pattern on jaws.” Indeed, as late as the 1830s and 1840, names such as Winnibar, Sinta, and Mingo, persist.⁵⁴ One Eastern Shore man recalled that his grandfather owned an African Slave by the name of “Suck,” and that his grandfather had purchased her from a “slave ship which had come up the Chesapeake Bay.” He remembered that, when he was a young boy, Suck told him that she had been a member of an African tribe that “was defeated in battle with another tribe and numbers of her people were captured” and sold to slave traders plying the African coast.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, the state’s free black population grew from approximately 1,800 in 1750 to over 8,000 in 1790, to well over 16,000 by 1810.⁵⁶ In Dorchester County, there were 5,337 enslaved and 528 free Blacks in 1790; by 1800, the free black population had increased dramatically to 2,365, while the enslaved population fell to 4,566. In Maryland

as a whole, the state's free black population increased from 8,043 to 19,587 over the same decade. Ten years later, the free black population had soared to 33,927.

Over the same period, Dorchester County's white population was largely stagnant, at around 10,000. Younger Dorchester Countians migrated to North Carolina, Georgia, and further west and south in search of better opportunities. Anthony Thompson's brother, Thomas, for instance, sold the majority of his landholdings, furniture and other property throughout the 1780s and early 1790s in preparation for a move to North Carolina.⁵⁷ And, in 1803, Joseph Brodess's brother, Edward, sold all of his property and set out for Mississippi with several other family members.

The status of free Blacks, however, did not improve in relation to their growing numbers. In fact, as the free black population increased, Whites became alarmed and quickly enacted new laws and codes to restrict their political rights as well as economic and social options. By 1796, free Blacks could no longer testify in court. Though some free Blacks had been given the right to vote if they had been free before 1783 and owned property, by 1802 all free Blacks were stripped of voting rights, just as poorer and landless whites were gaining access to the vote. Methodism, the great hope for many slaves in the 1790s, became increasingly more conservative and restrictive while appeasing the needs of the more recent converts, elite slaveholders. Gabriel Prosser's ill-fated plans for rebellion in Virginia during the summer of 1800 frightened whites throughout the South, and in 1805, a local Dorchester County slave was arrested and hung for planning an "insurrection to kill the white citizens of this county,"⁵⁸ permanently disabling any hopes for black liberty. During the War of 1812, British forces established a base on Tangier Island in the mouth of the Chesapeake, where they

made numerous successful attempts to entice slaves away from their owners to join the ranks of the British military, as the “Colonial Marines.” Visions of armed former slaves renewed slaveholders’ deep-seated fears of insurrection.⁵⁹

Throughout the 1810s, the Eastern Shore struggled through several years of war and economic uncertainty. While demand for export products such as grain and timber reached all time highs during the War of 1812, peace brought European products flooding back into American markets. Grain and timber prices dropped dramatically, severely affecting Eastern Shore farmers and manufacturers. The whole of Chesapeake trading faced increasing competition and barriers to freer trade with escalating tariffs and taxes imposed on both sides of the Atlantic.⁶⁰ The fortunes of many of Dorchester’s elite families waned; in fact, Anthony Thompson, one of the county’s largest land and slave holders and a pillar of the community, was imprisoned for debt in 1817. Many young Dorchester county men left for better economic opportunities in the expanding south and southwest territories. A credit crisis in 1819 further dashed the hopes of many entrepreneurial Eastern Shore families. Anthony Thompson, however, remained in Dorchester County, expanding his landholdings (in spite of debt problems) and continuing to farm his plantation and harvest virgin timber on tracks of land for local and Baltimore mills and shipyards.

As the Eastern Shore turned from a predominantly tobacco economy to one of grain and timber export, many slave owners started pruning their slave holdings to accommodate the shift from year-round labor-intensive tobacco growing to cyclical crops. A slowing local economy and the rise of cotton in the lower South dramatically altered the incentives for Maryland’s slave owners. Rather than manumit their slaves,

many planter families began to sell their excess slaves to traders plying the Chesapeake communities, looking for fresh sources of labor to satisfy the rapidly expanding southern economies of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, and Texas. The economic crisis facing Eastern Shore whites spelled potential disaster for their enslaved people and for free blacks. For black families, the constant possibility of separation emerged in the nineteenth century as one of the greatest threats to their well-being.

For Ben and Rit, the crisis became more real as Edward approached twenty-one, the age of maturity and the legal age at which he could claim his inheritance and independence from his step-father's control. Sometime before the census was taken in 1810, Mary Pattison Brodess died, leaving her minor son and her slaves in the care of her husband, Edward's stepfather, Anthony Thompson.⁶¹ Though Rit presumably worked for Thompson or was hired out by him for the benefit of young Edward Brodess's future inheritance, she and Ben appeared to have maintained the commitment to each other. Their young family grew to six children; in addition to Linah who was born in 1808; Mariah Ritty (1810), Soph (1812), Robert (1815), and Minty (1822) were born before Edward came of age in 1822.⁶² By that time, the Ross family's seemingly stable life was about to be dramatically altered.

CHAPTER ONE NOTES

¹ Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). This represents a census figure that is undoubtedly not totally accurate, as slave owners often expected their runaways to return of their own accord or to be returned forcibly, leaving open the probability of under reporting the actual number of runaways.

² Michel Sobel, The World They Made Together. Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

³ See Ira Berlin, Slaves without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South, (New York: The New Press, 1874); Jeffrey R. Brackett, The Negro in Maryland. A Study of the Institution of Slavery, 1889. Reprint, 1969 (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969); Robert J. Brugger, Maryland, a Middle Temperment, 1634-1980, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

⁴ See *Edward Brodess Vs. Anthony Thompson*, Dorchester County Court, April 24, (1827); *Edward Brodess, Jr., V. Anthony Thompson*, Eastern Shore Court of Appeals, 1823-1828. "Edward Brodess in Account with Anthony Thompson his Guardian for the years 1821 and 1822" (1828); Benjamin Drew, . The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery, 1855. Reprint, Tilden G. Edelstein, ed. Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, MA: 1969 ("Equity Papers 249." Dorchester County Circuit Court. Box 57. Loc. OR/8/12/2, MDSA. Annapolis, MD; "Thompson Deposition." Equity Papers 249. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.. Eliza Ann Brodess, "Three Hundred Dollars Reward," *Cambridge Democrat*, Cambridge, MD, October 3, 1849. Anthony Thompson's account record in *Edward Brodess vs. Anthony Thompson* lists a payment to a midwife on March 15, 1822. Eliza Brodess's reward notice, October 1849, lists Tubman as 27 years old. Dr. Anthony Thompson thought Tubman was born during this time period too. See also, Franklin Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, July 17, 1863. Tubman's mother's name is assumed to be Harriet, but called variously "Rit" and "Rittia."

⁵ Bucktown is the site of the plantation where Edward Brodess farmed and lived from approximately 1823 to 1849. Bureau of the Census. *United States Federal Census*, 1830. Dorchester County, Maryland.

⁶ Hulbert Footner, Rivers of the Eastern Shore, (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944). 170-204.

⁷ Footner, Rivers, 135-151

⁸ John R. Wennersten, Maryland's Eastern Shore: A Journey in Place and Time, (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1992). 119-121. Local names such as Menoke, Manoky, Clash, and other Nanticoke names still persist in Dorchester County.

⁹ This date is estimated based on testimony given by Rev. Dr. Anthony C. Thompson in October, 1853 that Rit's eldest daughter, Linah, was approximately 45 years of age. I have used the term "married" to recognize the known and documented committed relationship Rit Green and Ben Ross shared until their deaths in the latter part of the 19th century. See "Thompson Deposition, 1853."

¹⁰ Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman, (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 108.

¹¹ "Will of Atthow Pattison, Est. #0-35-E." Dorchester County Court House, Registrar of Wills. Cambridge, MD. The presumed site of Atthow Pattison's dwelling house is directly east, across the Little Blackwater River from the Blackwater Wildlife Refuge Office on Key Wallace Drive.

¹² "Atthow Pattison Will."

¹³ "Atthow Pattison Will."

¹⁴ "Equity Papers 249."

¹⁵ Brackett, Negro in Maryland, 149-150

¹⁶ For more information regarding the transformation of Maryland's agricultural practices and its attendant affects of slavery, see Brugger, Maryland, Fields, Slavery, T. Stephen Whitman, The Price of Freedom. Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland, (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997).

¹⁷ Brackett, Negro in Maryland, 55-57

¹⁸ Christopher Phillips, Freedom's Port. The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997). 38-42; Whitman, Price, 66-68; Brugger, Maryland, 168-170; Wennersten, Eastern, 120-121

¹⁹ Brackett, Negro in Maryland, 149-150

²⁰ Brackett, Negro in Maryland, 152

²¹ Brackett, Negro in Maryland, 153

²² Whitman, Price, 67

²³ 1776 Colonial Census.

²⁴ Bureau of the Census. United States Federal Census, 1790. Dorchester County, MD.

²⁵ "Thompson Deposition, 1853." Modesty may have been manumitted at a later date, before her death, though there is no surviving documentation to support such an assumption.

²⁶ "Athow Pattison Will."

²⁷ What became of Suke and Bess is unknown, though more detailed research in the chattel and land records of the time period may reveal the fates of these two women and their children.

²⁸ "Bill of Sale; 25 H.D. 395." Chattel Records, Dorchester County Court House. Cambridge, MD.

²⁹ Pattison's will was dated January 18, 1791. The 1790 census was completed for Dorchester County on March 9, 1791.

³⁰ This land was subsequently sold by Edward Brodess (uncle to Tubman's owner, young Edward Brodess,) to Clement Waters in 1803. Dorchester County Land Records, MDSA, 1803.

³¹ Debra Moxie, Great Choptank Parish Records, (Cambridge, MD.: Dorchester County Historical and Genealogical Society. Nd)

³² Having inherited several hundred acres in the early 1780s from his father in the Church Creek and Whitehaven area, Thompson's own plantation sat upon the Big Black Water River in central Dorchester County, "northside of the northwest branch of the Blackwater River," south of Church Creek (also, and more specifically, south of Woolford, then known as Loomtown, and Tobacco Stick, now known as Madison). Calvin W. and Mary I. Mowbray, The Early Settlers of Dorchester County and Their Lands, 1981, 2 vols. Reprint, 1992 (Westminster, MD: Willow Bend Books, 2000). Vol. 2, p. 54.

³³ "Equity Papers 249."

³⁴ *Brodess V. Thompson*.. The identities of these four male slaves is unknown, however, these court documents indicate that perhaps three of them may have been known as Sam, Frederick, and Schadrach.

³⁵ "Thompson Deposition, 1853."

³⁶ "List of Anthony Thompson's Negroes, 1839." Levin Richardson Collection, 1758-1865. MS 1405. Maryland Historical Society. Baltimore, MD. This list of slaves was

created in 1839 subsequent to the death of Anthony Thompson Sr. and served as a guide to Dr. Anthony C. Thompson and his brother, Dr. Absalom Thompson, for the distribution of the estate's forty-three slaves. Next to each slave's name Thompson listed that slave's time left to serve, as well as notes on the slave's "Relations." Next to Ben Ross's name (first name on the list and the slave with the least amount of time to serve as of January 1839) Thompson notes: "Wife and Children belonging to Edward Brodess." No documentation exists that indicates that Anthony Thompson purchased or sold any of his slaves.

³⁷ Lorena Walsh, "The Chesapeake Slave Trade: Regional Patterns, African Origins, and Some Implications," *The William and Mary Quarterly* LVIII, no. 1(2001): David Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment," *The William and Mary Quarterly* LVIII, no. 1(2001): 148

³⁸ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman, [July 17]." Sanborn would later write that she was "one degree removed from the wolds [sic] of Africa, her grandfather being an imported African of a chieftan family..." "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'." Franklin B. Sanborn Papers. Box 1, Folder 5. Box 1, Folder 5, American Antiquarian Society. Worcester, MA.

³⁹ Frank C. Drake, "The Moses of Her People. Amazing Life Work of Harriet Tubman.," *New York Herald*, New York, Sept. 22, 1907.

⁴⁰ Extensive analysis of manumission records, chattel records and court documents support the view that in general slave children carried the surname of the father, when known, in Dorchester County.

⁴¹ Ann Fitzhugh, "Harriet Tubman.," *American Review*, August 1912. 420. Miller is the granddaughter of Gerrit Smith, anti-slavery activist, Underground Railroad stationmaster, John Brown supporter, and a friend of Tubman's from Peterboro, New York. There is no other documentation suggesting that Rit's father was a white man. The identity of the white man remains unknown; Atthow Pattison seems a logical choice, or it could have been a man named Green; however this is indirect contrast to Sanborn's much earlier assertion that Tubman "has not a drop of white blood in her veins." See Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman."

⁴² "Thompson Deposition, 1853." Interestingly, the name Modesty is very uncommon on the Eastern Shore, either as a name for white or black women. The name Modesty here should not be confused with the much more common "Modeste" found throughout Louisiana as a name for slaves and French white women alike. The name Modesty is found in Puritan records during the 17th and 18th centuries. Only one other "Modesty," a black slave, has been located in the Dorchester County census records, manumission records, or chattel records from 1790 to 1860. See "Pattison, Gourney Crow, to William Henson." Dorchester County Chattel Records. C691. 1-4-4-41, Maryland State Archives. Cambridge, MD.

⁴³ Michael A. Gomez, Exchanging Our Country Marks. The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South., (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998). 107

⁴⁴ Gomez, Exchanging, 109-111.

⁴⁵ Gomez, Exchanging, 105.

⁴⁶ Ivor Wilks, Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of the Asante., (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1993). 41-72. See also, Gomez, Exchanging, 105-113. Gomez expands upon this scholarship, using T.C. McCaskie's work on the Asante. See T.C. McCaskie, State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante Society, (Cambridge: 1995).

⁴⁷ Gomez, Exchanging, 110.

⁴⁸ Gomez, Exchanging, 112.

⁴⁹ Gomez, Exchanging, 113.

⁵⁰ David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, and Herbert S. Klein, eds., The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade: A Database on Cd-Rom, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). "Debate centers on such issues as the composition of the peoples captured in the slave trade, the degree of random or concentrated redistribution in the Americas, the accuracy of the ethnic labels employed by slave traders and New World planters, and whether enslaved Africans" were cognizant of cultural similarities or ethnic bonds. See Walsh, "Chesapeake," 140-142.

⁵¹ Walsh, "Chesapeake," 148

⁵² Walsh, "Chesapeake," 152

⁵³ Walsh, "Chesapeake," 168-169

⁵⁴ See "Certificates of Freedom." Dorchester County Circuit Court Records. MDSA. Annapolis, MD., and US Federal Census 1800-1840.

⁵⁵ Joseph B. Seth, Mary W. Seth, Recollections of a Long Life on the Eastern Shore, (Easton, MD: Press of the Star-Democrat, 1926). 31. Seth had erroneously construed that Suck was not a real name. "She could give no name, except a sound, like suck, so she was known as 'Suck' all her days." Seth may not have recognized her African name as such.

⁵⁶ Berlin, Slaves without Masters, 45-48.

⁵⁷ See Debra Moxie. "Thompson Land Records," *Dorchester County Genealogical Magazine*, Dorchester Co., MD: ; and D.F. Thompson, "The Thompson Family in Dorchester County and Maryland," *Democrat and News*, Cambridge, MD, Jan. 7, 1910. D.F. Thompson, "The Thompsons in Dorchester," *Democrat and News*, Cambridge, MD, Jan. 28, 1910. Kay Najiyah McElvey, "Early Black Dorchester, 1776-1870: A History of the Struggle of African Americans in Dorchester County, Maryland, to Be Free to Make Their Own Choices." (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1991). From 1790 to 1800, the county witnessed an out migration of residents, from 10,015 to 9,415, though by 1810 it had rebounded to 10,415, where it would remain for the next forty years.

⁵⁸ "Special Court, July 1805." Debra Moxie, Dorchester County Criminal Court Docket, 1791-1805. Volume 1, (Privately printed, 1986). 52.

⁵⁹ Christopher George, Terror on the Chesapeake. The War of 1812 on the Bay, (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Books, 2000). 68-69.

⁶⁰ Brugger, Maryland, 196-199.

⁶¹ Bureau of the Census. United States Federal Census, 1810. Thompson is listed as "Anthony Thomas." This household includes 1 male under ten years old, who is assumed to be Edward Brodess. There are three other males, ages sixteen to twenty six, who are probably Thompson's sons, Edward, Anthony and Absalom. There is one female under ten years of age. The identity of this child is unknown; she may be Thompson's niece Barsheba whom he identifies in his will in 1836. In 1810 Thompson petitioned the Orphans Court, and in 1811 was awarded guardianship of Edward Brodess, thus legally assuming responsibility for maintaining Edward's inheritance, feeding and clothing him, as well as providing for his education. "Dorchester County Short Judgments, 1818-1827." Dorchester County Court Records. Maryland State Archives. Annapolis, MD. 157.

⁶² See "Thompson Deposition, 1853." Brodess, "Minty Reward." Emma P. Telford. "Harriet: The Modern Moses of Heroism and Visions," Cayuga County Museum, Auburn, NY: circa 1905.

CHAPTER II

SWEET GUM AND PRICKLY BURRS: THE CHANGING WORLD OF THE EASTERN SHORE

On March 15, 1822, Anthony Thompson paid a midwife, two dollars, to assist Harriet “Rit” Green in childbirth.¹ Harriet Tubman was born, “as near as she can remember, in 1820 or in 1821, in Dorchester County, on the Eastern shore of Maryland, and not far from the town of Cambridge.”² This could be a fortuitous record of Tubman’s birth; Harriet, like most slaves, was unsure of her own birth date.³ Frederick Douglass, the famous anti-slavery runaway and like Harriet, a native of the Eastern Shore, lamented his ignorance of the date of his birth: “I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time.”⁴

Harriet later recalled to an interviewer that at the age of about five she was left with the responsibility of caring for several younger siblings, probably Ben, born around 1823-1824, and Rachel, born about 1826, but also perhaps Henry, born about 1829 or 1830.⁵

When I was four or five years old, my mother cooked up to the big house and left me to take care of the baby an’ my little brother. I use to be in a hurry for her to go, so’s I could play the baby was a pig in a bag, and’ hold

him up by the bottom of his dress. I had a nice frolic with that baby, swinging him all around, his feet in the dress and his little head and arms touching the floor, because I was too small to hold him higher. It was late nights before my mother got home, and when he'd get worrying I'd cut a fat chunk of pork and toast it on the coals and put it in his mouth. One night he went to sleep with that hanging out, and when my mother come home she thought I'd done kill him. I nursed that there baby till he was so big I couldn't tote him any mo'.⁶

Dr. Anthony C. Thompson's deposition for the Pattison lawsuit over ownership of Rit, filed in 1852, remains perhaps the most accurate, though not necessarily complete, record of Tubman's siblings. A young boy when Rit and her mistress, Mary Pattison Brodess joined his father's household in 1803, Thompson was in a very good position to have particular knowledge of Rit and the birth of her children. The Pattisons, on the other hand, through whom Rit had originally come to Brodess, were also in a particularly important position to have knowledge of Rit's offspring. Indeed, the heirs of Elizabeth Pattison and her son Gourney Crow Pattison had in their possession slaves who were related to Rit. As owners of blood kin and fictive kin, the Pattisons would more than likely have known Rit's family status; living in the same neighborhood they had ample opportunity to observe Rit and her children. While the Pattisons had an economic interest in the outcome of the lawsuit, Thompson had little to gain, other than perhaps advancing a long-simmering feud between the Brodesses and the Thompsons. The testimony of neighbors of the Brodesses, while extremely important, adds little to determining the exact number of Tubman's siblings; they merely support information passed on by the Pattisons and Thompson.

In 1852 Thompson testified that he "always understood that said Rit was the mother of Linah, Soph, Robert, Ben, Harry, Minty, and Mose," or seven children in all.

According to his testimony, Linah was born sometime around 1808, and Robert was born

around 1815. Minty, he believed, was about thirty-two, and her younger brother, Ben, was born around 1822, with Henry or Harry following sometime around 1824, and Moses “at least 18 or 19 years of age.”⁷ Thompson’s testimony excludes any mention of Soph’s age; either it was omitted accidentally when transcribed into the court records, or Thompson neglected to say. The Pattisons thought that Rit had eleven children including, Soph who was “about 40” years old in 1852, indicating she may have been born in 1812. They agreed with Thompson’s assessment of Linah’s and Robert’s ages, but they claimed the existence of another daughter, “Mariah Ritty aged about 42,” born about 1810. In addition to Mariah Ritty, the Pattison’s also claimed a “Rachel,” supposedly thirty-eight years old, “Mary” born about 1822, “Manner” about twenty-eight, and “Harriet”, whose age they did not know. The Pattisons thought that “Minty” was about thirty-four, which would have placed her birth around 1818; her brother Robert about thirty-six and Ben about thirty-two. “Manner” was probably a misspelling of “Hanner” or Henry, and they claimed he was twenty-eight, the same age they claimed Moses to be. Numerous witnesses in this case testified as to their knowledge of the ages of the various children of Rit. Most witnesses agreed within an acceptable range the ages given by Thompson for these Tubman siblings.⁸ The Pattisons, it appears, claimed many of the children to be older than the those ages claimed by other deponents: the Pattisons may have simply hoped that by increasing the ages of the slaves they were improving their chances for claiming their labor once they reached the age of forty-five. Two of those claimed by the Pattisons were indeed grandchildren; Harriet and Mary (who may be the same person as Kessiah), were both children of one or more of Tubman’s sisters.

Brodess's neighbor Polish Mills recalled that he knew Rit "and her son Moses, he hired the said Rit with her two children Hannah and Moses from Edward Brodess in the year 1833 for their victuals and clothes, the said Rit and her children came to his house in the month of May in the same year, Moses her youngest was then sucking at the breast, he might have been one year old, or older, or somewhat younger, Hannah her next child was quite small, and could run about, there was probably a year and a half or two years between them. Moses could not walk, but crawl about."⁹ Another deponent, John Scott, agreed as to Moses's age, though gave little other information.

The Dorchester County Assessors Field Book for 1852 lists Eliza Brodess as the mistress of six slaves: Harry, aged 20; Ben aged 23; Bob aged 35; Rachel aged 27, and two minor children, Angerine, 5, and Ben, 3.¹⁰ The ages listed by the Tax Assessor do not compare favorably with Thompson's understanding of Harry and Ben's ages, differing by as much as seven to eight years; Bob is listed as two years younger than Thompson's testimony. The Brodesses would have every reason to underestimate the slaves' ages; knowing that they may have to liberate or turn them over to the Pattisons once they reached the age of forty-five if the lawsuit was successful, they would naturally want to keep the ages of the slaves as young as possible. Rachel, on the other hand, could be the very same person the Pattisons identified in their complaint. Though they claimed she was thirty-eight, not twenty-seven, this does not preclude the possibility that she is in fact the same woman.

Since the death of his wife, Mary Pattison Brodess Thompson, sometime around 1810, Anthony Thompson had continued his role as legal guardian to Mary's son, Edward Brodess. As Thompson's ward, Edward was dependent on the wise and prudent

management of his assets by his stepfather. These assets, which included over two hundred acres in Bucktown, slaves, cash and investments, and other real and personal property, were to come into Edward's possession when he turned twenty-one in June 1822. Thompson was legally bound by Maryland law to use Edward's estate for the maintenance and education of his ward, only, and to secure and preserve the estate's assets for Edward's use once he reached the age of maturity.

In June, 1820, the Orphans Court of Dorchester County authorized Anthony Thompson to proceed with the construction of a house, "a single story 32 by 20 [ft.] two rooms below with two plank floors and brick chimney, and also a barn of good material" on the Brodess property under the supervision of Brodess's uncle, Gourney Crow Pattison. At a cost of thirteen hundred dollars, the "improvements" to Brodess's property apparently exceeded the value of his estate. Unable or unwilling to reimburse Thompson for funds expended for the construction, Brodess was facing the prospect of having to sell part of his land or some of his slaves. In open defiance of his stepfather, Brodess forced Thompson to take the matter before the county court. Subpoenaed to appear in October 1823, Brodess eluded attempts to bring him before the Dorchester County Court in Cambridge for several months. Thomas H. Hicks, a lawyer and local Sheriff (and future Governor of Maryland), was commanded to take Brodess into custody to ensure that he would "have his [Brodess's] body before the Judges" to answer Thompson's suit for payment. Though Brodess may have been living out of the county at the time, it appears that he was in no hurry to appear before the court.¹²

Brodess finally stood before the justices of the court in April 1824, with his attorney, Robert P. Martin. Thompson charged that Brodess owed him "eighteen hundred and

sixty-nine dollars and two cents and one half cent current money for diverse goods wares and merchandise.”¹³ The additional monies claimed by Thompson included expenses for clothing, board, food, the care of slaves, and other similar items, totaling approximately five-hundred and seventy dollars. Over the next two years, the case was met with several lengthy continuances, as Brodess promised time and time again, to pay Thompson the full sum of money. By April 1827, Thompson still had not been paid. A jury decided in Thompson’s favor, and after striking out several claims originally allowed in the complaint, Brodess was ordered to pay Thompson immediately.

Supported by his Pattison relatives, Brodess appealed the case to the District Court of Appeals in Easton, Talbot County. Arguing that the Orphans Court of Dorchester County did not have the legal authority in 1820 to authorize Thompson to build on Brodess’s land, Brodess made a final attempt to avoid reimbursing his step- father. The appeals court agreed, charging the Orphans Court had exceeded its legal authority, and had, in effect, encumbered Brodess’s estate beyond what was legally allowed, at an “expense greatly exceeding the income of his estate, both real and personal.”¹⁴

Thompson had lost his case. The record does not indicate whether he was paid for personal expenditures he made at Brodess’s request during 1821 and 1822. No doubt this left a bitter legacy between the two men.

Brodess moved into his new house sometime around late 1823 and early 1824, leaving behind the social and community network that surrounded Thompson’s plantation in Peters Neck. Thompson had leased the Brodess’s property in Bucktown in 1821 and 1822, and probably for prior years as well.¹⁵ While it is possible that Rit and her young children accompanied Brodess to his new home, they may have remained with Thompson

for some time. Still the guardian to Edward Brodess, Thompson was responsible for the care and maintenance of Brodess's slaves and other property, both real and personal. In any event, if Tubman was born anytime before December, 1822, her mother, Rit Green, would have been under the control of, and possibly working for Edward Brodess's guardian, Anthony Thompson. Brodess was just coming of age in 1822, and Thompson was still responsible for hiring out and caring for his ward's slaves. According to testimony provided in his lawsuit against Brodess, Thompson also provided "board and clothing for two Negro children for ten months," from January to November 1822 at a cost of \$2.00 per month.¹⁶ Whether Harriet, or Minty as she was then called, was one of these children is not known. It is more than likely that clothing was required for older children, perhaps Robert and Soph, both of whom were younger than ten years old at that time. Minty would have been one or two years old at the most, and no doubt Rit provided for her youngest children with left over scraps of material. Thompson's accounts also indicate that he hired out Linah, who would have been 13 or 14 years old, for \$12.00 per year during 1821 and 1822. He also has accounts for Samuel, Shadrach and Frederick, presumably three of the four male slaves Mary Pattison brought from her dead husband's estate when she married Thompson in 1803. He makes no mention of Mariah Ritty, Soph, Robert, or any other slaves possibly connected to Brodess. In any event, Tubman recalled that,

in the eastern shore of Maryland Dorchester County is where I was born. The first thing I remember, was lying in de cradle. You seen these trees that are hollow. Take a big tree, cut it down, put a bode in each and, make a cradle of it and call it a 'gum. I remember lying in that there, when the young ladies in the big house where my mother worked, come down, catch me up in the air before I could walk.¹⁷

If Tubman is correct in her memory, and Emma P. Telford is correct in her transcription of her interview with Tubman in 1905, then it seems likely that Tubman was born not at Bucktown, but rather on or near Thompson's plantation while her mother was working for him, or on another plantation where Rit had been hired. Indeed, according to the 1820 U.S. Census for Dorchester County, Thompson had two white females between the ages of ten and twenty-six living in his house.¹⁸ Perhaps these are "de young ladies in de big house."

According to his account records, provided to the court in his suit against Brodess, Thompson credited his ward's account for the "hire of negro Rit for 1821," for the sum of sixteen dollars. Thompson debited the account for "43 days lost time for Negro Rit for the year 1821," and "board and attendance for Negro Rit for 43 days @ \$4 per month," for a total of \$7.63. This may have been for lost time associated with her pregnancy, but the record itself is not clear. There are similar debits for "lost time" for "Sam" and "Frederick," leading one to believe that perhaps these slaves suffered from a local epidemic of some sort.¹⁹ There are no similar credits or debits for 1822. Rit was not hired out for money in 1822, therefore one could assume that she either remained in his household for the year, or was hired out for merely clothing and food. This practice, of hiring out pregnant women and women with small children for board and clothing, was not uncommon.²⁰

Brodess married Eliza Ann Keene on March 2, 1824.²¹ By the time Brodess and Eliza set up their household, Rit had given birth to at least six, possibly seven children. It is unlikely, though not improbable, that Brodess would have insisted that Rit move to his home once he settled there. As a bachelor at first, then a young husband with a new

bride, crowding his small house with a slave woman and at least three very young children, in addition to the 3 or four males Brodess slaves he inherited, does not seem likely. In fact, Brodess would more than likely have required the services of the male slaves whom he inherited from his father's estate, Sam, Frederick, and Shadrach (and perhaps one other whose name is unknown) to help him run his farm. Though no records exist detailing the building of slave quarters on his property, Brodess could have built a separate shelter for his slaves. By 1830, however, Brodess's growing family of small children in addition to nine slaves suggests that he probably had separate slave quarters.²²

It is very likely, then, that the midwife whom Thompson hired for Rit, in March of 1822, was there to assist Rit as she gave birth to Tubman. We may never know definitively, though it seems highly likely that this is a record of Tubman's birth. Therefore, most evidence indicates that Tubman was not born in Bucktown, but rather on Thompson's property or on a nearby plantation. Neither Sarah Bradford, nor Franklin Sanborn mention Bucktown as the site of Tubman's birthplace, only that she was born "not far from the town of Cambridge," and neither author identifies Brodess as Tubman's owner.²³ William Still, in his 1871 Underground Railroad notes that "Eliza Ann Brodins, who lived near Bucktown", owned Tubman's brothers, and Henry, one of Tubman's youngest brothers, told the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission in 1863 that his master's name was "Edward Broadis."²⁴

Harkless Bowley, the son of Tubman's niece, Kessiah Bowley, claimed in 1939 that Tubman was born in "Bucktown Dorchester County... the property of Edward Brodas."²⁵ Harkless is the only person to identify Bucktown as Tubman's birthplace. After the Civil War, Harkless Bowley lived with Harriet in Auburn, N.Y. for about two years. His

family was in the process of moving from Chatham, Ontario, Canada, where they had fled with Harriet's help in 1850, back to Dorchester County. Resettling in Dorchester County before 1870, however, the Bowley's sought to re-establish their familial and community connections throughout the County. Harkless became a teacher in the local school system. Living near Bucktown, he would have met Edward Brodess's surviving children, several of whom continued to live on the family plantation in Bucktown. He would have been intimately familiar with the landscape where Tubman and his own family had been enslaved. No other evidence suggests that Tubman was actually born at Bucktown, and it seems quite possible that Harkless assumed this because he knew the Brodess's and their plantation. He never met Anthony Thompson Sr., who died in 1836, or Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, who passed away in 1868. Tubman herself states in an affidavit for her dead husband's Civil War pension, that she "was born in Cambridge."²⁶

By 1827, Edward Brodess and Eliza Anne had started a family of their own, and no doubt Eliza required the services of an experienced house servant. Where Rit and her children would have been at this point remains unknown. They may have been hired out to other masters in the area, to Anthony Thompson Sr., Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, or they could have been living on Brodess's land. Given the animosity, which the lawsuit created between Thompson and Brodess, it seems unlikely that Rit remained in Thompson's employ.

In 1825, Edward Brodess, now a married man living on his inherited land and in the house that Thompson built for him, sold a slave by the name of Rhody, age 16, to Dempsey P. Kane, a slave trader from Mississippi.²⁷ Listed as sixteen years old, this young girl, Rhody, is nearly the same age as Mariah Ritty. Brodess also sold a fifteen-

year-old boy named James on the same day.²⁸ Eliza Ann Keene, Brodess's wife, may have brought several slaves with her into the household when she married Brodess. Too young to be one of the male slaves whom Edward Brodess's mother Mary brought with her to Anthony Thompson's household, James may have been one of Eliza Ann Keene's slaves who moved with her upon her marriage to Edward. Rhody is most likely Mariah Ritty; the name, Mariah Ritty, fits the overall family naming pattern for Rit's family, and the transcription in the Chattel Records could have erroneously used Rhody instead of Ritty. Though Thompson never identifies Mariah Ritty as one of Rit's children, she is clearly identified by the Pattisons in their complaint against Eliza Brodess.

While privileging Thompson's testimony over other deponents in this case has its limitations, it does not preclude the possibility that Thompson may not have remembered her; Mariah grew up and was sold during the years when Anthony C. Thompson would have been out of the household. As a young man of seventeen years old in 1810, Thompson probably was on the verge of going away, or had already left, to pursue higher education in Annapolis, Baltimore, or Philadelphia. Eventually earning a medical degree from the University of Maryland, Thompson was more than likely away from his father's household for a number of years. In 1815, young Dr. Anthony C. Thompson returned to the Eastern Shore, setting up his business as the first doctor in St. Michaels in neighboring Talbot County.²⁹ Within the year he had married a local woman, Martha B. Kersey, and by 1818 moved to his mother-in-law's estate called "Mary's Delight," or as it would be known later, "Webley", after the death of the mother-in-law's second husband, Captain Thomas Frazier. Thompson would remain on this property, assisting in its management until his mother-in-law died in 1825.³⁰ In addition, Dr. Thompson's

father, Anthony Sr.'s own slave holdings were increasing dramatically during this time period, from 15 slaves in 1810 to 39 slaves in 1820.³¹ The elder Thompson had many young slaves by 1820, including fourteen female slaves under the age of fourteen.

Anthony Thompson Jr. could have easily not noticed, or he could have forgotten about Mariah Ritty, particularly if she was sold by the time he moved back to Dorchester County. He recalled Tubman's other siblings because they were all still living in the area when he returned to the community, and remained so until they were sold at much later dates or ran away.

Throughout the first three decades of the 19th century, Thompson continued to expand his landholdings throughout the region, buying vast tracks of virgin timber that his slaves, including Ben Ross, set about cutting, hauling, and shipping to the Baltimore shipyards. Ross was "a timber inspector, and superintended the cutting and hauling of great quantities of timber for the Baltimore shipyards."³² During the winter months, Ben Ross probably spent much time away from Thompson's plantation and home, working instead in camps settled in the forests where he and other slaves and free blacks were timbering Thompson's land for the shipyards of the Eastern Shore and Baltimore. Thompson was one of the more enterprising landowners in the area taking advantage of the changing economic opportunities in Dorchester County. Talbot County had long dominated the shipbuilding industry on the Eastern Shore, but by the turn of the 19th century, that county had effectively been timbered over. Shipbuilders turned their attention to neighboring Dorchester County with its thousands of acres of dense forests, and established shipbuilders in Dorchester eagerly expanded their own operations to meet demand. Thompson clearly maintained not only long standing familial ties with many of

these shipbuilding families, the Richardson, Stewarts, and the Linthicums, etc., but he also capitalized on the opportunities at hand; as a successful land speculator, his supply of timber was crucial to many other shipbuilders along the Shore, particularly at Church Creek, Tobacco Stick, Cambridge, but also Baltimore. Dorchester County shipbuilders made their wealth building “West Indies traders, coastal schooners and brigs for tramp trading, and vessels for the growing number of packet services that called at ports from New England to New Orleans.”³³ The demand for fast and sturdy schooners during the War of 1812 was great, and provided a significant livelihood and boost to the local economies of the Eastern Shore. At the end of the War, however, demand dropped. But the swiftness of the Chesapeake schooners proved irresistible to illegal slave traders. Outlawed in 1793, the building of slave ships became a clandestine operation; it would take another twenty-five years before the penalties were serious enough to “drive most Americans out of direct participation in the trade.”³⁴ Poor enforcement, however, made the risk reward assessment weigh in favor of building these ships. From about 1835 to 1855, risking capital punishment, Chesapeake shipbuilders, including those in Dorchester County, provided the fast schooners and brigs for the illegal trade. They also retrofitted existing ships to accommodate the particular cargo.³⁵

For some enterprising Eastern Shore landowners and entrepreneurs, however, new economic opportunities in timber encouraged the building of canals and roads, sawmills and small shipyards to ease access and accommodate shipments of timber to the Baltimore market. With its abundant creeks, rivers and navigable marshes, Dorchester County became the ideal location for large scale agricultural and timber harvesting, shipping and trading. These same rivers, creeks and bays offered ideally protected

locations for shipyards. In 1809, a group of enterprising Dorchester county farmers and businessmen petitioned the legislature to authorize a “Lottery to raise a sum of money for the purpose of cutting and opening a Canal from the Head of Blackwater River to the Head of Parson’s Creek.”³⁶ Access to capital was limited on the lower Eastern Shore. Still considered somewhat of a backwater, relatively poor in comparison to the Western Shore or to expanding Baltimore, Dorchester remained quite isolated in the early republic. Dorchester entrepreneurs, like Anthony Thompson and others, faced an uphill battle to improve their economic options. Growing demands for corn and other agricultural products, matched by the escalating demands for timber, sparked great hope for the County. The harvesting of timber cleared great swaths of land for agricultural production. Windmills dotted the low lying landscape, pumping water from marshy lands, and churning great grindstones for the milling of corn, wheat and oats. Indeed, this once less-than-desirable marshy land held great promise for the future. Access to the Chesapeake ensured access to trade and capital. Canals were needed to supplement the many small rivers and streams throughout the county to increase that access.

Hoping to raise thirty thousand dollars through a lottery, several Dorchester men bonded themselves to Maryland’s General Assembly for the opportunity to sell lottery tickets throughout Maryland to raise enough money to build this canal.³⁷ Anthony Thompson, among others, was appointed commissioners, authorized to “survey, lay out, and designate... the ground through which said canal shall be dug.”³⁸ Unfortunately, rising tension with the British, leading to collapsing wartime markets, prevented the lottery or canal from materializing, and in 1816 the Maryland General Assembly voided the 1810 Act. In the meantime, Anthony Thompson petitioned the assembly to open a

road from the “Baptist Meeting House” in Tobacco Stick, south to “Indian Landing on Black Water River,” passing near and through Thompson’s property.³⁹ Called Thompson’s New Road, and then later, Harrisville Road, it provided access to water on either end; Tobacco Stick Bay on the Little Choptank River to the north, and the Big Blackwater River and Fishing Bay to the south. The canal would take another fifteen years to materialize. Incorporated as the “Black Water and Parson’s Creek Canal Company,” Stewart’s Canal was finally finished during the 1830s. The canal, originally carved out of marshland from Parson’s Creek south to “the head of Black Water River,” eventually swept northeast, joining Tobacco Stick Bay. Joseph Stewart, son of Levin Stewart, and Anthony Thompson and Robert Tubman were among the seven commissioners appointed to oversee its construction and operation.⁴⁰ Requiring a tremendous amount of manual labor, the canal was built by the labor of enslaved and free blacks, and white laborers as well. Stewart’s Canal still exists little changed from its original configuration in the 1830s.

Before the canals were built, teams of oxen and large timber “gangs” were necessary to haul the heavy white oak and other lumber from the forests. Marshy wetlands made hauling the timber incredibly difficult. Roads had to be laid with split logs, creating a marginally effective road surface upon which oxen and slaves gained footholds to pull their great loads. It was exhausting and back breaking work only the youngest and strongest could endure. Even with the addition of the canals, timber still had to be hauled from great distances from the interior.

Not all landowners were as entrepreneurial, or as ambitious as Thompson or the other leading citizens of the Shore. In the decade leading up to 1820, Eastern Shore

planters were faced with a declining agricultural base, competition from expanding southwest territories, and an ever increasing free black population which lived in stark contrast to the large numbers of enslaved blacks still laboring under Maryland slave masters. Though Quakers continued to denounce the institution of slavery, Methodism became more and more sympathetic and accommodating to white slaveholders.

Economic pressures facing many Eastern Shore planters forced many to begin selling their excess slave labor to slave traders plying the Chesapeake markets. With the legal end of African slave trade in the U.S. beginning in 1808, traders from the Deep South and southwest territories turned to internal markets to meet the voracious demand for fresh labor to clear and tame vast new territories in the southwest. Eastern Shore families also moved to these areas, eager for an opportunity to buy and develop large tracts of land, establish productive plantations, and become landed gentry in their own right. William and Thomas Hayward, for instance, moved their families and slaves to Florida; as early settlers they became part of that territory's economic and political power structure. Returning years later to Dorchester County as successful entrepreneurs, they settled comfortably among the political, economic and social elite of the Eastern Shore. Their slaves, however, were permanently separated from their extended families and friends, remaining behind on the Haywards' plantations in Tallahassee.⁴¹

By the mid 1810s, manumissions were on the wane, with far more slaveholders opting to sell their slaves rather than manumit them. Quaker complaints and other abolitionist arguments fell on deaf ears, although several attempts were made during the 1820s and 1830s to introduce legislation that would have provided for gradual emancipation, but to no avail. One movement did gain momentum, however; the

American Colonization Society, founded in 1817 by prominent slaveholders, anti-slavery activists, and non-slaveholders alike, sought to establish a colony in Africa to resettle free Blacks. Faced with one of the largest free black populations among the slave states, Maryland eventually established its own Colonization Society to expedite settlement for free blacks at Cape Palmas in Liberia. Dorchester County slaveholders represented a significant number of the Maryland Colonization Society's leadership, and one of the colony's first settlers and leaders was a free black man named James Benson from Cambridge. But the majority of free blacks were not interested in moving to Africa. Many of them free born or manumitted and raised in Maryland, were reluctant to leave the homes they knew. Their enslaved families and friends represented ties most of them were unwilling to sever.⁴²

The transformation of cash crop agriculture on the Eastern Shore dramatically affected the nature of slavery by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Soil depletion, expansion into the Deep South, corn, wheat, other grains, and timber harvesting for the burgeoning shipbuilding industry in Baltimore changed the nature and the dramatically altered the need for a large slave labor force in Maryland requirements of an enslaved labor force. With the growing demand for labor from cotton and sugar plantations in the southwest spurred a flurry of slave sales on the Eastern Shore. Many planter families began to sell their excess slaves to traders plying the Chesapeake communities, looking for fresh sources of labor to satisfy the rapidly expanding cotton and sugar plantations of Georgia and South Carolina, and then Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and even later, Texas. Like Virginia, which was experiencing many of the same agricultural labor transformations, Maryland began to earn the reputation as a "breeder" state, where the

market in slaves became incredibly lucrative for slaveholders whose wealth was rapidly evaporating in the changing economy. While some slaveholders were determined to sell their enslaved people within the community to avoid breaking apart families, the economic incentives were often too great to afford such a luxury for cash strapped masters. Prices paid by slave traders eager to sell to high paying Deep South plantation owners were much higher than those paid for slaves locally. The presence of professional slave traders was becoming more common on the Eastern Shore, and the sight of slave coffles, groups of slaves chained together for their journey south, became increasingly common, creating a destabilizing force within the slave and free black community. Indebted landowners and encumbered estates found ready cash courtesy of the slave traders.

Edward Brodess does not appear to have manumitted any of his slaves. Members of the Pattison family, the Thompsons and the Stewarts all practiced various forms of manumission, from immediate to term slavery, to manumission upon the death of the master. These manumissions play a key role in Harriet Tubman's future, and are important to the creation of a vibrant and tightly knit black community that proved crucial to the survival of her family over decades of harsh enslavement.

On July 28, 1817, Levin Stewart strode into the Dorchester County Court House and manumitted his slaves. Witnessed by James Pattison, who would in the following September manumit his slaves, Levin recorded that "for diverse good causes and considerations... have and do release from slavery, liberate, manumit and set free ... all my Negroes that I am at present possessed of, after serving, as is hereafter mentioned." Varying from immediate emancipation to freedom in 30 years, Levin determinedly set

about precisely calculating the exact number of years each one of his enslaved peoples would serve him and his sons, James A., Joseph and John T. Stewart. “Dick, aged six months,” was to serve for thirty-one years, while his mother “Binah, aged twenty-eight,” was to serve “ten years from this date.”⁴³ Binah was more than likely African born, like Modesty, Harriet’s grandmother.⁴⁴ Perhaps married to a free black, Binah had five children, all enslaved by Levin Stewart. Her boys, Major, John and Richard “Dick” Bowley were included in the 1817 deed of manumission; two daughters, Harriet and Terry were born shortly thereafter. Stewart manumitted them, too, setting their terms of service to twenty-six years. These Bowleys would become intimately involved with Tubman’s family. Living and working in the same area of Dorchester county, they would become part of a well established free black community centered around Harrisville Road south of Woolford, and the shipyards in Tobacco Stick, Woolford, Church Creek and Cambridge.

Indeed, Stewart had experienced an epiphany of sorts. Though far from the ideal of immediate emancipation for all of his slaves, Levin was actually operating in contrast the prevailing mood on the Eastern Shore. Eschewing top dollar for each healthy slave he could have sold to a Baltimore or New Orleans trader, Stewart ensured a free future for his slaves. After a brief sojourn in Caroline County, Stewart moved to Georgetown to pursue shipbuilding and trading with his half brother Zachariah Skinner. He no longer needed great numbers of slaves; he sold or gave many of them to his sons, Joseph, James A., and John T.; the remainder became part of Stewart’s estate when he died in 1825, and were eventually sold locally or to his sons. Carefully trained as shipwrights and carpenters, blacksmiths and sail makers, Stewart’s enslaved people were part of an elite

group of highly skilled slaves. They were also highly mobile, affording them unusual freedom, even as slaves. Over the next forty years, Levin's sons would manumit these slaves according to the term limits set by their father in his deeds of manumission.

His friend, James Pattison, followed suit that September by manumitting his slaves. Rev. John Seward, a prominent local Methodist minister, may have influenced both Pattison and Stewart. Seward had acquired more than thirty slaves, probably through his three marriages. In January 1817, Seward manumitted all of his slaves based on staggered manumission dates, much like Stewart. Stewart and Pattison may have been following Seward's example, or Seward may have directly pleaded with his congregants to do as he did.⁴⁵ Though some manumission records have been lost, it appears that these three manumissions from 1817 represent a significant portion of not only manumissions for that year, but because of the staggered manumission schedules, these groups of slaves represent a significant number of the many Certificates of Freedom to be awarded during the next four decades.

Anthony Thompson, Ben Ross's master, may have manumitted several of his slaves prior to his death in 1836. Thompson held in bondage nearly 43 slaves by the time he died in 1836. Thirty-nine slaves are noted as living on his property in the 1820 census, and he may have hired many more male slaves or free blacks, in particular, to clear his lands. Ross, and fellow bondsman Jerry Manoke were clearly among Thompson's most highly favored bondsmen. Both men were given ten acres of land to live on for the remainder of their lives when Thompson died. Earning a reputation for honesty and integrity, Ross was manumitted by Thompson's will in 1840; Jerry was given his freedom immediately.⁴⁶ In his will, however, he specifies specific terms of enslavement

for each of his 45 enslaved people, from immediate emancipation as in the case of Jerry Manoke [Manoka], to Ben's freedom five years after Thompson's death, to 44 year terms of service required of infants.⁴⁷ Thompson viewed himself as the benevolent caretaker, providing the future promise of liberty in return for loyalty and good behavior. By liberating his slaves based on term limits, Thompson was guaranteeing that the benefits of their labor would be accrued to his sons Anthony C. and Absalom, thereby perpetuating the economic investment in the slaves while ultimately providing for gradual emancipation. Gradual emancipation dissipated the slave owners need to provide for the board and care for aged slaves, and the children born of enslaved women would provide slave labor into perpetuity.

Out of necessity, families separated by the nature of their work assignments no doubt found a means to communicate, and visit on occasion. Regional trade and transportation of goods provided one source of mobility for slaves. These networks of families and friends form a nexus of communication that paralleled the maritime communication networks. Black inter and intra-regional networks that often paralleled the white networks of trade, travel and communication, remained mostly invisible to whites.

Unlike slaves on the large isolated plantations of the Deep South and Southwest, whose lives were often defined and restricted to the plantation, Dorchester County slaves experienced far greater mobility, increasing their opportunities for social, cultural, and economic exchanges. The limited number of work options, the preponderance of manumissions that contributed to a flourishing free black community, and the mobility of white families, fostered a communal network that paralleled the white community. Free and enslaved labor worked side by side on the plantations during planting and harvest

seasons, in the forests harvesting timber, on the wharves loading and unloading goods, and in the ship yards building and refitting ships for traders and speculators. Friendships formed, marriages took place, and families became intertwined, often reflecting the duality of black legal and social status in the County, free and enslaved.

Anthony Thompson's enslaved people reflect this phenomenon. In 1820, the Thompson slave population had grown to thirty-nine slaves, an increase of 24 slaves in ten years. But the majority of this increase is to be found in the incredible number of young children; twenty-two of these slaves were under the age of fourteen. Four slaves, two women and two men, were between the ages of fourteen and twenty-six; five more male slaves were between twenty-six and forty-five, as were seven of the female slaves. According to Anthony Thompson's list of slaves from the 1839 inventory, the majority of slave women were not married to his enslaved men. Some were married to free men, others to men enslaved by nearby slave owners in Church Creek, Tobacco Stick, and Cambridge, while others appear to be married to slaves owned by masters living in Talbot County. Betsy, for instance, was married to Major Bowley, the son of Binah Bowley. Binah and Major were both eventually manumitted by Levin Stewart. Sarah Ann [Reed] was married to a slave "belonging to Dr. [Robert] Tubman." Both of these women lived near their husbands, and, therefore, were able to create and maintain stable family relationships. Hanner, on the other hand, was married to man owned by "Mr. Haddaway" of Talbot County. While it would appear that this particular relationship would have problems due to separation, in fact, Hanner was hired out to Dr. Absalom Thompson, Anthony Thompson's son, who was still living at "Webley" at Bayside in Talbot County, a few short miles by boat, or thirty miles away by land from Dorchester

County. Hanner may have been living with Absalom, which could have precipitated her meeting and marrying her husband, or, she could have met him beforehand and the Thompsons accommodated the relationship. This practice was not unheard of, and from the point of view of the master, having “contented” family oriented slaves kept them closer to the plantation and less likely to run away. Thompson’s male slaves likewise were mostly married to women who did not belong to him. Bill Banks and Isaac were married to women enslaved by Mrs. Stapleford of Talbot County.⁴⁸ These seemingly long-distance relationships demonstrate the mobility of the slaves, either because of being sold away from each other, or because of the nature of the Thompson family’s mobility. Obviously, Anthony Sr. and Absalom visited one another, and in fact probably carried on some business transactions together. Absalom Thompson built a schooner, the *Isabella*, in 1832; he could have purchased the timber from his father for such a project.⁵⁰ Absalom had few slaves of his own; as a doctor, he had less need for a large labor force. His slaves farmed his property at Bayside, and perhaps helped him maintain the rudimentary hospital he built on his property. No doubt the Thompsons shared their enslaved labor when the times required. When Anthony Thompson Sr. died in 1836, his son Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, Absalom’s brother, became executor of his father’s estate. He was assigned the responsibility of manumitting and devising to the heirs Thompson’s forty-three slaves. At the outset it appears that Dr. Anthony C. and Dr. Absalom attempted to accommodate family relationships, with Absalom maintaining under his control those slaves with ties to Talbot County, or who were perhaps already working for him.

For a small planter such as Brodess, however, slave children appeared to have been a burden for him, possibly perceiving them as a distraction for their more useful and productive slave mother. By hiring out his excess slaves, Brodess was able to maintain his social status within the community, and feed his own growing family of eight children without the added responsibility of providing for troublesome, and hungry, slave children. While hiring Tubman and her siblings out to neighboring, or well paying, farmers, he also imagined that he was increasing the productive labor of his mature slaves, particularly Rit. Though we will never know how Rit managed to cope with having her children hired away from her, there is little doubt that it had a negative impact on her emotional and physical well-being. Brodess did not always choose to hire out his excess slave labor, however. Throughout her youth, Tubman heard the stories of older siblings who had been sold away before she was born; and she remembered the “agonized expression[s]” of two other sisters as they were taken away, and the “hopeless grief” of her parents. Tubman claimed that for many years “she never closed her eyes that she did not imagine she saw the horsemen coming, and heard the screams of women and children, as they were being dragged away to a far worse slavery than that they were enduring there.”⁵¹ For Edward Brodess, the funds from sales of several of Tubman’s siblings provided opportunities to expand his land holdings and sustain his growing family. Though Brodess continued Thompson’s practice of hiring out his excess slaves, he was not above selling them. Though Brodess was probably nursed and cared for by Rit as a child, and perhaps he may have felt a strong emotional bond with her, it did not prevent him from taking her children away from her.

After the War of 1812, the Eastern Shore experienced a dramatic increase in the sale of slaves to active slave traders plying the Chesapeake communities. Escalating for the next forty years, sales of slaves to parties from outside the County and State sent shock waves throughout the relatively isolated black communities of the Eastern Shore. Indeed, Tubman's family history and relationships reflects connections between slave and slaveholder that span several generations. Tubman's grandparents, parents, siblings, cousins and other family members all belonged to succeeding generations of the same families. Given the nature of patriarchal, and almost feudal attitudes toward inheritance patterns from the 17th through the early 19th centuries, the preponderance of intra-family marriages kept white family assets intact, including assets such as slaves and their future offspring. The importation of new slaves into the community became inconsequential during the early part of the nineteenth century. A growing free black community supported by manumissions, natural increases and localized trading kept the slave community relatively stable and many families units somewhat intact. Inter-marriage between closely allied and related white families ensured the stabilization of slave families within the geographic area. Therefore, the relationships between the same or closely related white and black families, either through blood, emotional, economic, or geographic ties, became intricately linked for generations, creating a "long memory" for both groups. Harriet Tubman's family was no exception.

But for slave labor in the declining Eastern Shore and southern parts of the state, sale into the expanding plantation economies of the Deep South and southwest was increasingly common. In fact, the courthouse at Cambridge, Dorchester's county seat, was the center of the largest slave market on the Eastern Shore. The changing economic

situation forced many slave owners to begin selling their enslaved labor out of the State, and the big slave trading firms from Baltimore, Norfolk, Kentucky, New Orleans, and Mississippi arrived in Dorchester County with cash in hand to buy. The Woolfolk brothers from Baltimore eventually opened a branch office in Cambridge, advertising consistently in the Cambridge and Easton newspapers; they were met by such competitors as Thomas Overlay, who on one occasion advertised for “50 to 100 likely Negroes, from ten to twenty-five years of age, of both sexes, for which the highest market prices will be given in cash.”⁵² Other dealers included Hope Slatter of Baltimore, Henry Boyce of Louisiana, who was willing to “give the best price for those between the ages of 12 and 25 years,”⁵³ and James Cox of Scott County, Kentucky who, on one occasion, purchased thirty-eight slaves, including men, women and children, 6 months to 31 years, from John W. Hanes for \$6,610.⁵⁴ Austin Woolfolk, one of the largest, most successful and most notorious of slave traders from Baltimore, assured his Eastern Shore slaveholders that he “still lives to give them cash and the highest prices for their NEGROES.”⁵⁵ Most of Woolfolk’s slaves ended up in the New Orleans market.

Local dealers often posed as representatives for larger slave traders from outside of Maryland. Charles LeCompte, a local slave dealer located in East New Market, sold over one-hundred slaves during 1827 to traders from Mississippi and Kentucky, mostly teenagers and young adults, though he also sold infants and young children separate from their parents.⁵⁶ While many slave traders frequented the area to purchase slaves, they relied on these local dealers to provide the goods, and to negotiate better deals.

Peter Lowber, who would later become constable of East New Market, became quite active in the local trade. In November of 1829, Lowber sold to James Baldock of Scott

County, Kentucky, 10 slaves, mostly under the age of ten for \$1,210.⁵⁷ Over the next few months, Lowber would sell more slaves to Bartholomew Manlove of Bourbon County, Winder C. DINGLE, and George Bates, all of Kentucky.⁵⁸

These large traders were supplemented by small individual planters, who traveled the Eastern Shore to purchase slaves directly for their own use on plantations in the Deep South. With new land to be cleared and crops to tend, these young entrepreneurs sought to buy directly, cutting out the middleman, and save themselves hundreds of dollars on each slave. A slave purchased for \$400 in Cambridge could be sold for nearly \$800 in Mississippi or Louisiana.⁵⁹

Indeed, for Tubman's family, the presence of slave dealers and traders became a fact of their lives. In July of 1825, Edward Brodess sold to Dempsey P. Kane of Mississippi, Rhody, aged 16, and James, aged 15. As discussed before, this Rhody may be Mariah Ritty; the young female slave the Pattison's claimed was one of Rit's daughters.

Regardless of the exact nature of the relationship, Brodess opted for top dollar for his slaves, rather than sell to nearby slave owners. Many slaveholders were reluctant, even in the face of greater economic gain, to sell beyond the County limits, let alone beyond State lines. Social customs reinforced the notion of guardianship and benevolence over one's slaves; the emotional costs of bereaved and distraught slaves over the loss of their love ones to traders beyond the State, and the sight of large slave coffles trudging off to Baltimore overland or via boat from Cambridge, was distasteful and uncomfortable to many Eastern Shore whites. Indeed, some felt so pressured by this social stigma that they claimed their slaves had run away, instead selling them secretly elsewhere. According to one local story, one slave dealer handled the "problem" quite successfully for years. "Joe

Johnson was greatly feared and also very popular in his home neighborhood. Many times he sold slaves for Sussex and Dorchester neighbors who could not sell them publicly. In those abolitionist times citizens who did not wish the financial loss [sp] of freeing their slaves claimed them runaway and instead had Johnson sell them south. This had been illegal in DE since 1787 and in MD and VA since 1789.” Johnson would later be tried for kidnapping free and enslaved Blacks and selling them; and even later would be implicated with the notorious Patty Cannon of Dorchester County in the murder of innocent victims whom they buried in the backyard of Cannon’s house.⁶⁰

For Harriet and her family, the sale of Rhody (Mariah Ritty) and James would mark the beginning of increased threats to their family stability. Already separated from their father, Ben Ross, Harriet and her siblings would find themselves traveling great distances, at times, to work for other temporary masters. Other relatives, friends and fictive kin would find themselves on the auction block at Cambridge Court House, or sold in private deals to traders or local slaveholders. The economic pressures on Brodess only intensified as his family grew, and he saw his social and economic status fluctuate uncomfortably. Spoiled to a degree, and perhaps in competition with his more successful (economically and socially) stepbrothers, Anthony C. and Absalom Thompson, Brodess may have seen his excess slave labor as ready cash. That he sold Rhody and James to a Mississippi trader indicates his desire for higher prices for his bondswoman and man, rather than the more socially acceptable choice of selling within the community. Raised in comfortable circumstances, provided amply for by his step-father, living the life of a middle-class bachelor prior to his marriage, Brodess may have had little experience, and perhaps even little desire, to run a small plantation and care for numerous slaves. In fact,

during the two years prior to his leaving Thompson's guardianship, Brodess's expenses did not include expenditures for farm equipment or clothing appropriate for the life of a yeoman planter, but rather made purchases of cashmere and silk clothing, numerous pairs of shoes, "pantaloons," vests, coats and handkerchiefs, "gilt" buttons, ribbons, and fine stockings.⁶²

Sometime during the 1830s, or even as late as 1841, Brodess sold Harriet's two sisters, Linah and Soph. "She had already seen two older sisters taken away as part of a chain gang, and they had gone no one knew whither; she had seen the agonized expression on their faces as they turned to take a last look at their "Old Cabin Home;" and had watched them from the top of the fence, as they went off weeping and lamenting, till they were hidden from her sight forever."⁶³ Linah and Soph "were sold out of State," thought Dr. Anthony C. Thompson.⁶⁴ Polish Mills, Brodess's neighbor and local farmer who hired Rit and Linah in 1833, remembered that "some years after that Brodess sold her [Linah] to a purchaser for the sum of Four Hundred Dollars, and the said Brodess further stated to witness in regard to the sale of Linah, that he thought it was best to turn her proceeds into Land." Mills went on to testify that Brodess "claimed the said Linah as a slave for life, and as such he understood from him, he sold her beyond the limits of the County... and [Mills] understood also that Brodess made sale of Soph." Mills also claimed "slaves for life... as a general rule... sell for one third more."⁶⁵

Ben and Rit, of course had little control over Brodess's actions. While slaves were often given an opportunity to secure a local buyer, it appears that the Ross's probably had no such opportunity. Interestingly, no records exist as to the sales of these two sisters. Curiously, most buyers would require a bill of sale to secure their title; registering the

sale at the local Court House ensured legal ownership. Brodess may have avoided such a process by selling to a less than scrupulous buyer; by not registering the sale at the Dorchester County Court House Brodess could avoid paying taxes on the transaction. Also, an out of County trader, such as the Woolfolks or the Slatters could have simply recorded the sales in Baltimore. (Baltimore slave records for the time period were destroyed during the 1970s.)

One of the sisters (probably Linah) had “a young child, about two or three months old, & the master came after her to sell her to Georgia. Her husband had great confidence in a gentleman, who was a class-leader⁶⁷, & he takes my sister and carries her to him to keep her from her master. He told him-

‘Get your wife and bring her to me, and I will take care of her.’ So he did it. At the same time, the old master [Brodess] had got him to look out and get her, and after her husband carries her there, this man turns round and lets the master understand it, & he comes and gets her & sells her down to Georgia, and leaves that young child...⁶⁸

Tricked by Brodess, and unable to prevent or forestall the sales of her children, Rit no doubt remembered his betrayal. At an unknown later date, Brodess attempted to sell Rit’s youngest son, Moses. According to his brother Henry,

a Georgia man came and bought my brother; and after he had bought him, the master calls him to come to the house & catch the gentleman’s horse, but instead of his coming to catch the horse, my mother, who was out in the field, and knew what the master was doing, comes in. She had a suspicion that they were going to sell the boy, and went to the backside of the house, and heard the master count the money; and after he had counted out the money, the master says, ‘I ought to have fifty dollars more yet,’ and ... the mother comes, she says, “What do you want of the boy?” He wouldn’t tell her, but says to her, ‘Go and bring a pitcher of water’; and after she brought the pitcher of water, she goes to work again. Then he makes another excuse, & hollers to the boy to come & put the horse in to the carriage. But the mother comes again. Then he says, ‘What did you come for? I hollered for the boy.’ And she up & swore, and said he wanted the boy for that (ripping out an oath) Georgia man. He called three times, but

the boy did not come; and a third time, he came to look for the boy, but the mother had hid him, & kept him hid, I suppose for a month.⁶⁹

Brodess held onto the money, thinking he would eventually get Moses from his hiding place and turn him over to the Georgia trader. As in most instances, “foreign” traders would stay for one or two months, purchased scores of slaves, holding them in slave pens or the county jail, until enough purchases had been made to make the trip south worthwhile economically. But he had not bargained on Rit, or on the network throughout the community that would help conceal him. Rit must have recognized that she had a glimmer of a chance to protect her youngest son, and confident that she had more to gain than lose by resisting Brodess’s attempts to take her son away from her.

Brodess enlisted the aid of a loyal servant, perhaps one of the Keene slaves, who apparently felt pressured or compelled to find favor from his master, who revealed Moses’s location in the woods. Isolated and remote, South Central Dorchester was probably an ideal hiding place for recalcitrant and defiant slaves. Indeed, Greenbriar Swamp, just south of the Brodess property, is today still considered inhospitable and treacherous territory for humans. The dense foliage of trees, briars, weeds, and swampy muck makes passage incredibly difficult and habitation nearly impossible. But it was also an ideal hideout for runaway or defiant slaves like Moses. And Rit knew it.

Rit “thought there was something wrong” when the servant suggested that he bring food to Moses in the woods. Not letting on that she was aware of his betrayal, she warned Moses ahead of time, and sent the man into the woods with food. “At noon,” the servant went to the “bush, expecting the boy would be there... but the boy wasn’t.” Later that evening, he came to Rit with a neighbor, John Scott. Standing at her cabin door, he asked to be let in,

but she was suspicious and she says, 'What do you want?' Says he, 'Mr. Scott wants to come to light a segar.' She ripped out an oath, and said; 'You are after my son; but the first man that comes into my house, I will split his head open.' That frightened them, and they would not come in. So she kept the boy hid until the Georgia man went away, and then she let him come out. Then the master came to the mother, and said he was exceedingly glad she hid the boy, so that he couldn't sell him. He told her, 'when we wanted you to send the boy to the woods, we were there to catch him.'⁷⁰

Rit gambled and won. Her defiant attitude toward her master and another white slaveholder from her community reflects Rit's desperation as she faced the prospect of losing another child. She risked her own safety to protect her son, perhaps gambling on the notion that Brodess would not confront her directly and take her son from her with her full knowledge. She had been a consistent and probably somewhat nurturing (from his perspective) presence in his life since the death of his own mother when he was still a young child. She may not have been able to prevent the sales of her other daughters, but this time Rit played her hand and won. It was a fleeting moment, however significant. For Ben, miles away and working for another master, the inability to control the fates of the lives of his own children must have been nearly unbearable.

With the constant threat of sales of family members permanently affecting Harriet's family emotionally, they still had to endure the uncertainty of daily survival. Merely assets for Brodess's gain, they were hired out to temporary masters throughout the Eastern Shore, never confident in the stability of their home life or occupational status, or in what the next day may bring. For Harriet, Rit could only protect her when in her own presence. Hired away from the Brodesses at Bucktown, Harriet would endure beatings, whippings and general neglect at the hands of temporary masters, marring her childhood and young adulthood and forever scarring her mind and body. The economic and

political entanglements that tie and divide this community, and a myriad family disputes and petty jealousies, irrevocably altered the fates of Tubman's family who were increasingly chafing under its ever tightening grip.

CHAPTER TWO NOTES

¹ *Edward Brodess, Jr., V. Anthony Thompson*, Eastern Shore Court of Appeals, 1823-1828. "Edward Brodess in Account with Anthony Thompson his Guardian for the years 1821 and 1822" (1828); *Edward Brodess, Jr., V. Anthony Thompson*, Eastern Shore Court of Appeals, 1823-1828. "Edward Brodess in Account with Anthony Thompson his Guardian for the years 1821 and 1822" (1828). 5. See also, Eliza Ann Brodess, "Three Hundred Dollars Reward," *Cambridge Democrat*, Cambridge, MD, October 3, 1849.

² Sarah H. Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 73

³ According to the 1865 Fleming, New York census, Rit is noted as having 9 children. This contradicts Franklin Sanborn in his early article on Tubman (*The Commonwealth*, July 17, 1863). Sanborn states that Tubman "has ten brothers and sisters", thus Rit would have had 11 children. This discrepancy could be the result of Tubman referring to close kin as "sister" or "brother." Based on my research, it appears that Rit did indeed have nine children, and also cared for two grandchildren. These two grandchildren, Kessiah and Harriet, were very likely the daughters of one of Tubman's sisters, either Lina or Soph, both of whom had been sold. These two granddaughters were very close in age to Tubman, therefore she may have considered them "sisters." The record of this birth, however, could also be that of Tubman's younger brother, Ben, also born within this time period.

⁴ Frederick Douglass, Benjamin Quarles, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself*. (1845; Reprint, 6th). Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1971). 23.

⁵ "Gourney C. Pattison, William Pattison and Others Vs. Eliza Brodess, Eliza Brodess and John Mills Administrators of Edward Brodess, and Thomas Willis." Dorchester County Circuit Court (Equity papers). MDSA. Annapolis.; "Thompson Deposition." Equity Papers 249. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.; and "Assessment Record." Dorchester County Board of County Commissioners. C687. MdHR 18,631, MDSA. Cambridge, MD.

⁶ Emma P. Telford. "Harriet: The Modern Moses of Heroism and Visions," Cayuga County Museum, Auburn, NY: circa 1905. 4 I have chosen to normalize the plantation dialect authors used when quoting Tubman. I am not sure how accurate their transcriptions of her particular speech patterns were, and, therefore, have chosen to place a normalized version within the body of the text with the actual source reprinted in the footnotes for those readers interested in the original wording. I have done this throughout the whole dissertation. "When I was fo' or five years ole, my mother cooked up to the big house and' lef me to take care ob de baby an' my little brudder. I use ter be in a hurry

fer her to go, so's I could play de baby was a pig in a bag, and' hole him up by de bottom ob his dress. I had a nice frolic wid dat baby, swingin' him all 'roun, his fee in de dress an' his little head an arms techin de flo', cause I se too small to hole him higher. It was late nights for my mother's git home, an' when he'd get worryin' I'd cut a fat chunk ob pork an' toast it on de coals an' put it in his mouf. One night he went to sleep wid dat hangin' out, an when my mother come home she thought I'd done kill him. I nussed dat er' baby till he was so big I couldn't tote him any mo'." There is also the possibility that Harriet cared for a sister's child, unidentified. The ages here do not match exactly. We cannot be sure of the accuracy of the Telford's interview, nor can we be definite on the number and ages of Tubman's siblings. It is likely that she cared for Ben, her "little brother," and either Rachel, misidentified as a boy, or Henry, who was born much later, making Tubman 7 or eight when he was born, or, perhaps, her niece Kessiah.

⁷ I believe that transcriber of the deposition made a mistake and wrote "28" for "Harry" or Henry instead of "23." "Thompson Deposition, 1853." All other records indicate Henry was born around 1829-1830.

⁸ "Equity Papers 249." Dorchester County Circuit Court. Box 57. Loc. OR/8/12/2, MDSA. Annapolis, MD; Dorchester County Court, Chancery Papers 249. (Cambridge, MD: Dorchester County Court House, 1853).

⁹ "Equity Papers 249."

¹⁰ "Assessors Field Book." Dorchester County Board of County Commissioners. C688. 1-5-2-12, MDSA. Annapolis. Cambridge, District 7, 100.

¹¹ *Edward Brodess Vs. Anthony Thompson*, Dorchester County Court, April 24, (1827). 6

¹² *Brodess Vs. Thompson; Brodess V. Thompson*. 1-4. The court records refer to Brodess as: "Edward Brodess Junior late of Dorchester County yeoman." This implies that Brodess is not living in Dorchester County at the time. Perhaps he is away at school, or living in Talbot County with Dr. Anthony Thompson, his step-brother. He could also have been living with relatives in Mississippi or another territory or state. The record remains unclear as to Brodess's whereabouts until 1824.

¹³ *Brodess Vs. Thompson; Brodess V. Thompson*.

¹⁴ Maryland Court of Appeals, Decisions of the Court of Appeals of Maryland. Vol. 1, 1827-1828. (Annapolis: Jonas Green, 1828). Pp125-126; and *Brodess Vs. Thompson*.

¹⁵ *Brodess Vs. Thompson*. 6.

¹⁶ *Brodess V. Thompson*. "Edward Brodess in Account with Anthony Thompson his Guardian for the years 1821 and 1822." 4-8.

¹⁷ Telford. "Harriet," 3. "...in the eastern shore of Maryland Dorchester County is where I was borned. Du fust ting I member, was lyin' in de cradle. Youse seen dese trees dat ar hollow. Take a big tree, cut it down, put a bode in each and, make a cradle of it a 'call is a 'gum.Ise member lyin in dat yar,Telford. "Harriet," when de young ladies in de big house whar my mother wukked, come down, cotch me up in de air befo' I could walk."

¹⁸ Bureau of the Census, *United States Federal Census, 1820*. Dorchester County, MD.

¹⁹ *Brodess Vs. Thompson*. 5

²⁰ "Mills Deposition." Equity Papers 249. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.

²¹ no author, Dorchester County Maryland Marriage Records. (Cambridge, MD, 1996).

²² Bureau of the Census. *United States Federal Census, 1830*.

²³ Bradford, Scenes. 73; Franklin Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, July 17, 1863.

²⁴ William Still, The Underground Railroad rpt. 1970 ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Johnson Publishers.) 305-307; John W. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977).; interview with Henry Stewart, 1863, Canada. 414.

²⁵ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Reel 1, Box 3 folder d2. NYPL - Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. New York. Letter, Bowley to Conrad, August 8, 1939.

²⁶ Nelson Davis, "Original Pension Files," in Pension no. 449,592 (College Park, MD: National Archives, 1894). Affidavit of Harriet Davis.

²⁷ "Edward Brodess to Dempsey P. Kane". Vol. Liber 9 ER 624 p. 625, Dorchester County Land Records. (Annapolis, MD: MDSA, July, 1825).

²⁸ "Edward Brodess to Dempsey P. Kane".

²⁹ Oswald Tilghman, History of Talbot County Maryland, 1661-1861 [Vol. 2]. 2 vols. Vol. II. (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Company, 1915). 397.

³⁰ F. Edward Wright, Irma Harper, Maryland Eastern Shore Newspaper Abstracts: Northern Counties, 1825-1829. Vol. 5. (Westminster, MD: Willow Bend Books, 2000). 57. Easton Gazette, October 29, 1825.

³¹ Census. United States Federal Census, 1820. Dorchester County, MD.

³² Bradford, Scenes. 75.

³³ Geoffrey M. Footner, Tidewater Triumph: The Development and Worldwide Success of the Chesapeake Pilot Schooner. (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1998). 136.

³⁴ Howard I. Chapelle, The Search for Speed under Sail, 1700-1855. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967). 299.

³⁵ Chapelle, The Search for Speed under Sail, 1700-1855. (299-203. See also Quentin and Ann Jensen Snediker, Chesapeake Bay Schooners. (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1992). 33-35.

³⁶ Laws Made and Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Maryland [Vol. 3182]. Vol. 3182, Chapter CXI, 6th Jan., Archives of Maryland. (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives, 2002). 712

³⁷ Laws Made and Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Maryland [Vol. 3182]. 712.

³⁸ Laws Made and Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Maryland [Vol. 3182]. 712.

³⁹ Laws Made and Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Maryland [Vol. 192]. Vol. 192, Chapter CXXIX, 28th Jan. 1814, Archives of Maryland. (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives, 2002). 1529.

⁴⁰ Laws Made and Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Maryland. Vol. Chapter 54, 5 Feb. 1830, Archives of Maryland. (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives, 2002).

⁴¹ Freedmen's Bureau. "Freedmen's Bureau Bank Records," Church of the Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City:

⁴² Robert J. Brugger, Maryland, a Middle Temperment, 1634-1980. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988). See pp. 206-215 in particular.

⁴³ "Levin Stewart to Sundry Negroes." Dorchester County Court, Court Papers, 1797-1851. Original Papers. MDSA. Annapolis. See also, Elaine McGill, transcriber, Certificates of Freedom, Dorchester County Court 1806-1864. (Privately Printed, 2001). This is a transcription of the actual Certificates of Freedom Record Book, 1806-1864 for Dorchester County held at the Maryland State Archives.

⁴⁴ Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's research into slave names indicates that Binah was an African name, Muslim in origin and generally found on the West Coast of Africa.

⁴⁵ "John Seward to Sundry Negroes, January 15, 1817." Dorchester County Court, Court Papers, 1743-1849. Original Papers. MDSA. Annapolis.

⁴⁶ "Last Will and Testament of Anthony Thompson." Register of Wills, Dorchester County Court House. Estate No. 0-65-C. Cambridge, MD. "ten acres of land for and during his life time, peaceable to remain to be laid out to his house binding with the road on the west side with the privilege of cutting timber on any part of my land for the support of the same..."

⁴⁷ "Anthony Thompson Will."

⁴⁸ "List of Anthony Thompson's Negroes." Levin Richardson Collection, 1758-1865. MS 1405. Maryland Historical Society. Baltimore, MD.

⁴⁹ Footner, Tidewater Triumph: The Development and Worldwide Success of the Chesapeake Pilot Schooner. 140

⁵⁰ Footner, Tidewater Triumph: The Development and Worldwide Success of the Chesapeake Pilot Schooner. 140

⁵¹ Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Sons, 1886); Bradford, Scenes. 15

⁵² "Cash," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Cambridge, MD, December 25, 1830.

⁵³ "Notice [August 30, 1828]," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Cambridge, MD, August 30, 1828.

⁵⁴ Debra Moxie, Dorchester County Genealogical Magazine. (Cambridge, MD: Privately Printed. July 1995, Vol. XV, no. 2, 8

⁵⁵ "[Advertisement]," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Cambridge, MD, January 9, 1836. See also Frederick Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, rpt. 1996). 39-44.

⁵⁶ Dorchester County Court, Chattel Records. (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives, 1827-1833).

⁵⁷ Moxie, Dorchester County Genealogical Magazine. January 1997, Vol. XVI no. 5, 4.

⁵⁸ Moxie, Dorchester County Genealogical Magazine. January 1997, Vol. XVI no. 5, 4; and, May 1997, Vol XVII no. 1. 7.

⁵⁹ Bancroft, Slave Trading in the Old South. See p. 30 in particular. For additional scholarship on the slave trade, see Walter Johnson, Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).; and Hugh

Thomas, The Slave Trade. The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade: 1440-1870. (New York: Touchstone, 1997).

⁶⁰ Debra and Deanna Marshall Moxie, ""Patty Cannon Story"," *Dorchester County Genealogical Magazine*, November 1994. Vol. XVI, no. 4, 3. See also, George Alfred Townsend, The Entailed Hat or Patty Cannon's Times. A Romance. (Cambridge, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1955).

⁶¹ See *Brodess Vs. Thompson*. There are numerous entries for purchases of items for Brodess that appear to be inconsistent with the life of a farmer.

⁶² See *Brodess Vs. Thompson*. There are numerous entries for purchases of items for Brodess that appear to be inconsistent with the life of a farmer.

⁶³ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 15

⁶⁴ "Thompson Deposition, 1853."

⁶⁵ "Mills Deposition." Mills Deposition, 1853.

⁶⁴ This may have been Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, who by this time had been ordained a minister in the Methodist Church, a "church leader." This person could have been a number of other local ministers, however.

⁶⁸ Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony., 414-416.

⁶⁹ Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony. 414-416.

⁷⁰ Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony. 414-416.

CHAPTER III

“DEVILISH” MISTRESSES AND HARSH MASTERS: BLACK FAMILY LIFE UNDER THE LASH

Harriet Tubman has provided us with few details about her owner, Edward Brodess, or the various masters to whom she was hired out for the nearly thirty years she spent in slavery. For all the attention paid by biographers to Edward Brodess and his role in Tubman's life, there is little evidence on the amount of time she spent under his roof or on his plantation. Indeed, “she seldom lived with her owner, but was usually “hired out” to different persons.”¹ Brodess, Tubman told Sarah Bradford, was “never unnecessarily cruel; but as was common among slaveholders, he often hired out his slaves to others, some of whom proved to be tyrannical and brutal to the utmost limit of their power.”² Harriet's brother, Ben Ross, claimed his mistress, Eliza Ann Brodess, was “very devilish.” They were forced to “work hard and fare meagerly,” Ben claimed, to support the Brodesses in “idleness and luxury.”³ Robert Ross, Harriet's older brother, felt Edward Brodess “was not fit to own a dog.” Ben was less specific, but more to the point; “Where I came from,” he later recalled, “it would make your flesh creep, and your hair stand on end, to know what they do to the slaves.”⁴

When Tubman's two younger brothers were perhaps too big or adventurous for her to watch safely, she was hired out to James Cook, a planter of limited means who lived on a small farm “ten miles” distant, to learn the trade of weaving.⁵ Though only six or seven years old at the time, Tubman remembered vividly the man coming on horseback

to get her. Young and obviously uninformed about what might lay ahead, Tubman “was anxious to go.” She had no clothes, so Eliza made her a “petticoat,” and off she went with him, for the first of many separations from her family. Accustomed to spending most of her time with her family and other slaves, Tubman was at first reluctant to find herself in the house with her new master and his family. “When we got there,” Tubman recalled, “they was at table eating supper. I never eat in the house where the white people was, and I was ashamed to stand up and eat before them.”⁶ Her new mistress offered her a drink of milk, which Tubman refused; she was so nervous standing in front of unfamiliar white people, that even her hunger was not enough to overcome her fears. “I was as fond of milk as any young shoot. But all the time I was there I stuck to it, that I didn’t drink sweet milk.”⁷ She may have stayed with the Cooks for as long as two years. Cook and his wife were cruel however, and her time spent with the Cooks left her ill and physically scarred.

As one of her first tasks, she was sent into the nearby marshes to watch for Cook’s muskrat traps. The marshy wetlands of Dorchester County provided an ideal habitat for muskrats, with plenty of vegetation, soft peaty soil to build burrows, and ample, shallow fresh water suitable for a semi-aquatic life. Trapping them, of course, requires setting traps on the banks of streams where they burrow, or in the marshes where they build domed “houses” in marshes. This environment is incredibly cold. Trapping muskrats would be a difficult task for a young child, but in cold water during the winter trapping season, when muskrat pelts are at their finest, even more so. “It happened that she was once sent when she was ill with the measles, and, taking cold from wading in the later in

his condition, she grew very sick, and her mother persuaded her master to take her away from Cook's until she could get well.”⁸

Rit nursed her weakened child back to health, only to have her hired out again and again. “I use to sleep’ on the floor in front of the fireplace an there I’d lie and cry an cry. I us to think all the time if I could only get home and get in my mother’s bed, an the funny part of that was, she never had a bed in her life. Nothing but a board box nailed up against the wall and ‘straw laid on it,” she told an interviewer seventy years later.⁹

“Another attempt was made to teach her weaving, but she would not learn, for she hated her mistress [Cook], and did not want to live at [Cook’s] home, as she would have done as a weaver, for it was the custom then to weave the cloth for the family, or a part of it, in the house.”¹⁰ Tubman became increasingly homesick, later telling Emma Telford that she was “like the boy on the Swanee River, ‘no place like my ole cabin home.’ Whenever you saw a child was more homesick than I was, you see a bad one.”¹¹

Tubman also worked as a nursemaid and house servant to a young married woman, “Miss Susan.” According to Bradford, Susan provided “liberally for her slaves--so far as food and clothing went. But she had been brought up to believe, and to act upon the belief, that a slave could be taught to do nothing, and *would* do nothing but under the sting of the whip.” Harriet, young and untrained, was “put to house-work without being told how to do anything. The first thing was to put a parlor in order. ‘Move these chairs and tables into the middle of the room, sweep the carpet clean, then dust everything, and put them back in their places!’ These were the directions given, and Harriet was left alone to do her work.”¹²

Ever mindful of the whip located on the fireplace mantel, Harriet struggled to complete her tasks quickly and well. She “swept with all her strength, raising a tremendous dust. The moment she had finished sweeping, she took her dusting cloth, and wiped everything ‘so you could see your face in ‘em, de shone so,’ in haste to go and set the table for breakfast, and do her other work. The dust which she had set flying only settled down again on chairs, tables, and the piano.”¹³ Seeing only the settled dust, “Miss Susan” suspected that Harriet had not done her work. Taking the whip from the mantle, Susan beat Harriet repeatedly on the “head and face and neck.” While enduring a fifth beating “before bakfast,” little Harriet received a momentary reprieve. Susan’s sister, Emily appeared at the door. “Not being able to endure the screams of the child any longer,” Emily scolded her sister for her cruelty and impatience. According to Bradford, Emily instructed “Minty” on how to clean the room properly so as to prevent the dust from resettling on the furniture. Instructive and moralizing, Bradford offered her readers two versions of the Southern slave mistress; one wicked and cruel, the other saintly and patient, with no slaves of her own (apparently) to cloud the picture or corrupt her. Emily’s kind instructions to the child Minty “saved Harriet her whippings for that day, as they probably did for many a day after.”¹⁴ This story of a kind Southerner may have been Tubman’s own view of the events as well, or, perhaps Tubman and Bradford wanted to offer encouragement to a genteel Northern public eager for some sort of hopeful reconciliation, even as early as 1868.¹⁵

Tubman later recalled that she was so little and so young when she was called upon to care for “Susan’s” baby, that she had to sit on the floor in order to hold it. “An that baby was always in my lap except when it was asleep, or its mother was feedin’ it.”¹⁶

Indeed, her workday was never over; “she was obliged to sit up all night to rock a cross, sick child. Her mistress laid upon her bed with a whip under her pillow, and slept; but if the tired nurse forgot herself for a moment, if her weary head dropped, and her hand ceased to rock the cradle, the child would cry out, and then down would come the whip upon the neck and face of the poor weary creature.”¹⁷ Samuel Hopkins Adams, grand nephew to Sarah Bradford and a child during the 1870s and 1880s, later recalled Tubman reluctantly drawing “down her dress,” in front of him and his cousins, to “exhibit the cruel weals on [her] neck and shoulders.” She told them, with a “gleam in her button-bright eyes,” that these cruel masters never made her “hollah,” and that her revenge came when she returned to those plantations and helped relieve them of their bondsmen, women and children.¹⁸

Apparently, Susan’s bad temper also often flared up against her husband. While watching a heated argument unfold in front of her one morning, Harriet took the opportunity to steal a small lump of sugar from a bowl on the table near her.

An that sugar, right by me, did look so nice, and my Missus’s back was turned to me while she was fighting with her husband, so I just put my fingers in the sugar bowl to take one lump, and maybe she heard me, and she turned and saw me. The next minute she had te raw hide down; I give one jump out of the door, and I saw they came after me, but I just flew, and they didn’t catch me. I run, and run, and I run, I passed many a house, but I didn’t dare to stop, for they all knew my Missus and they would send me back.¹⁹

Harriet ran to a neighboring farm and hid in a pigpen. Exhausted from running away, and too small to climb in carefully, she tumbled into the pen and landed in the midst of “an ole sow, an’ perhaps eight or ten little pigs... I was so beat out I couldn’t stir.” She stayed from Friday until the following Tuesday, fearful of the mother pig as she fought over scraps of food which came down the trough. “I was so starved I knowed

I'd got to go back to my Missus, I hadn't got no where else to go, but I knowed what was coming." Bradford inquired if Tubman had received a "flogging" from her mistress.

"No," Tubman reported, she received that from her master instead.²⁰

Harkless Bowley, Harriet Tubman's great-nephew, recalled in 1939 that Tubman told him she was "shamefully beaten. She showed me a knott in her side by being struck by one cruel man with a rope with a knot in one end... for some trivial offence. The woman attempted to whip her," but Harriet would not submit to her. When the master came home, Harriet's mistress complained, but he decided not to "attack her at that time but sent her [Harriet] upstairs to roll some carpets. When she was thus engaged he crept up behind her and delt an awful blow."²¹ The beating broke her small ribs and may have lacerated her internal organs, and Harriet could no longer work. Half starved and "unable to perform the heavy" tasks given her, Harriet was returned to Brodess, carrying wounds that "pained her all of her life."²²

These two early childhood stories of the Cook's and "Miss Susan" are often conflated and confused with one another in the retellings of Tubman narratives. James Cook and his wife, and Susan and Emily, belonged to two separate households, and they do not appear to be related families. James Cook appears in Franklin Sanborn's autobiographical essay in the *Commonwealth* as Tubman's first experience away from home.²³ Sarah Bradford focuses exclusively on "Miss Susan" and her sister Emily in her Tubman biography, but she also included Sanborn's article from the *Commonwealth*, in its entirety, in her book; therefore, confusingly, both stories are presented in Bradford's books as Tubman's first experience being hired away.²⁴ Emma Telford, another early biographer, mentions no names in connection with Tubman's first time away from home,

only that she was hired to become a weaver.²⁵ Nevertheless, cruel treatment, whippings and beatings inflicted upon Tubman during this time period left scars “still plainly visible where the whip cut into the flesh,” forty years later.²⁶

The practice of hiring out excess slave labor was very common on the Eastern Shore. It provided valuable income to slaveholders who could not profitably use all of their slaves, and it provided a ready labor force to non-slaveholders and slaveholders who required more labor but did not want to own more slaves. For the slaves themselves, it often meant painful separations. For children it was particularly difficult and, who like Tubman, they became terribly homesick and despondent.²⁷ While most “rental” contracts stipulated that the slaves be clothed, fed, and sheltered properly, this was not always the case.²⁸ William Still, the famous Underground Railroad operator, interviewed many runaway slaves who described mistreatment from temporary masters, particularly the lack of food and frequent beatings. Often, their frustration was compounded by their owner’s supposed disinterest.²⁹

Slaveholders often viewed the hiring out of their slaves, even children, as an attractive alternative to selling them; the hiring out of a young male slave could command as much as one-hundred twenty dollars per year, well above the interest that could be earned on the investment if the slave was sold for cash. Edward Brodess, with a small farm and few livestock, did not have enough work to fully employ all of his slaves, so he frequently hired them out to neighboring farmers and relatives. Brodess was able to maintain his social status within the community and feed his own growing family of eight children, preserving his “assets” until a later date when his in slaves could be more profitably turned into “land.”³⁰

During 1833, Brodess hired Rit and her daughter Linah out to a neighboring farmer, Polish Mills, separating, once again, Harriet and her siblings from their mother. Mills provided food and clothing only; Rit was nursing her youngest child, Moses, at the time and another child, Henry, aged two and half or three “could run about.” Linah may have been ill, for according to Mills she was weakly and he thought her not to be very valuable as a slave.³¹ Harriet, in the meantime, was living either with the Brodesses nearby, or had already been hired out as a field hand to a neighboring farmer. She recalled some years later that she risked defying her master by sneaking out in the evening to visit her mother at Mills’s plantation. In the years following the Nat Turner rebellion, restrictions on the movements of slaves and free blacks, particularly at night, had markedly increased. One of Harriet’s brothers stood guard outside the slave cabin door, watching the road in the event slave patrols or her master appeared unexpectedly. One particular evening, “when the stars fell,” Tubman’s brother “called her to come out and see the stars. ‘They were all shooting whichway.’”³² The great “Leonid” meteor shower was one of the most spectacular celestial events to occur in modern times. During the evening of November 12, and into the early morning hours of the 13th in 1833, thousands of shooting stars illuminated the night sky. An Annapolis, Maryland observer noted that the “light was so intense,” and that the meteors “fell like snow.” Another observer in Boston wrote that the sky had the “appearance of a thick shower of fire.”³³ An Eastern Shore resident recalled the meteor shower resembled a “snow storm of fiery flakes – so thick and numerous were they.”³⁴ This spectacular meteor shower was seen throughout the country, sparking fear and awe in millions of people. While this incredible celestial display inspired the

beginning of modern meteor science, Tubman and her family “all thought the end of the world had come.”³⁵

The slaves in the area may have taken this natural phenomenon as a harbinger of some impending calamity. So much of their lives were shaped and dictated by outside forces, both human and natural over which they had little control, it is no wonder they imagined the end of the world was at hand. It was probably not too long after this event, when Tubman was still an adolescent and hired out as a field hand on a neighboring plantation, that she received an almost fatal blow to the head from a stone or iron weight intended to fell another slave. This injury changed the course of her life, not only through the physical disability it caused, but also because it sparked physiological changes that redefined the way Tubman viewed the world.

Tubman had been hired out for her clothing and food to “de wust man in de neighborhood.”³⁶ It was in the fall, a busy time on farms and Tubman was assigned to breaking flax in the field. “My hair had nebber been combed an it stood out like a bushel basket,” Tubman recalled, “an’ when I’d git through eatin’ I’d wipe de grease’ off my fingers’ on my hair an ‘I spect dat ar hair saved my life.”³⁷ One night, Tubman and the plantation’s cook went to the store to purchase a few items for the house. According to Franklin Sanborn, “one of the slaves of a farmer named Barrett, left his work, and went to the village store in the evening,” and Harriet was there when the slave boy arrived, but his overseer followed him. “When the slave was found, the overseer swore he should be whipped, and called on Harriet, among others, to help tie him. She refused, and as the man ran away, she placed herself in the door to stop pursuit. The overseer caught up a

two-pound weight from the counter and threw it at the fugitive, but it fell short and struck Harriet a stunning blow on the head.”³⁸

The names of the defiant slave boy and the irate overseer remain unknown, although the owner of the slave who was the object of the overseer’s rage was more than likely Thomas Barnett, who, in 1834 was leasing a large piece of property in Bucktown.³⁹ Thomas Barnett’s father, Thomas, Sr., was a successful planter, owning a large tract of property just east and southeast of the Brodess’s plantation, near the Bucktown crossroads. A dry goods store, located at the crossroads of Bucktown Road coming from the northeast, Bestpitch Ferry Road from the south, and Greenbrier Road from the west (toward the Brodess plantation), is the most likely scene of the tragic event.⁴⁰

Tubman later told Emma Telford that “I had a shoulder shawl’ of the mistress over my head and when I got to the store I was ashamed to go in, and saw the overseer raising up his arm to throw an iron weight at one of the slaves and that was the last I knew.” She remembered vividly how the weight “broke my skull and cut a piece of that shawl clean off and drove it into my head. They carried me to the house all bleeding and fainting. I had no bed, no place to lie down on at all, and they lay me on the seat of the loom, and I stayed there all that day and next.” Apparently receiving no medical attention, Tubman was returned to the field. “I went to work again and there I worked with the blood and sweat rolling down my face till I couldn’t see.”⁴¹ Healing slowly, the wound left a permanent dent in Harriet’s skull, and she suffered from severe headaches and an unknown condition – perhaps narcolepsy – that caused her, on occasion, to unexpectedly fall fast asleep, no matter where she was. “Disabled and sick, her flesh all wasted away, she was returned to her *owner*.” Brodess attempted to sell her, but no buyer was

interested in purchasing a sick and disabled slave. “They said they wouldn’t give a sixpence for me,” Tubman later recalled.⁴²

Franklin Sanborn reported that it was a very long time before Tubman recovered from this injury, which left “a wound ever afterwards visible.”⁴³ Returned to Brodess as useless, Rit nursed her crippled child back to health. Thereafter, Tubman was often subject to unexpected episodes of “lethargy... coming upon her in the midst of conversation, or whatever she may be doing, and throwing her into a deep slumber, from which she will presently rouse herself, and go on with her conversation or work.”⁴⁴ Sometimes, Bradford reported, it was “almost impossible to rouse her.”⁴⁵

Tubman was unable to control the after effects of this injury. Her episodes of dropping off to sleep in the midst of conversation, or while performing a task, as well as during her many trips on the Underground Railroad are well documented. Franklin Sanborn, Sarah Bradford, and countless other abolitionists, suffragists, family, friends and acquaintances, noted it. Sometimes these spells were frequent and unsettling. The *Freedmen’s Record* reported in 1865 that the injury “still makes her very lethargic. She cannot remain quiet fifteen minutes without appearing to fall asleep. It is not a refreshing slumber; but a heavy, weary condition which exhausts her.”⁴⁶ Wilbur Seibert interviewed Harriet Tubman in the mid 1890s and noted with surprise that her injury “caused her at frequent intervals (say of half an hour or so) to lose consciousness for three or four minutes. She explained that her head would drop and she would become silent, but I was not to become alarmed; she would arouse and continue her talk without losing the thread of her conversation.”⁴⁷

The head injury also coincided with an explosion of religious enthusiasm and vivid imagery in the young slave woman. Tubman broke out, often unexpectedly, into loud and excited religious praising. If this injury caused her great suffering, it also marked the beginning of a lifetime of potent dreams and visions that, she claimed, foretold the future. Some of her dreams eventually took on an important role in Tubman's life, influencing not only her own courses of action, but also the way other people viewed her. Taken together, the range of symptoms and behaviors that followed Tubman's terrible head injury strongly point to the likelihood that she suffered from Temporal Lobe Epilepsy, or TLE. The seizures, or "sleeping spells," and "visions" observers noted in Tubman are typical of Temporal Lobe Epilepsy brought on by severe head injuries.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the bright lights, colorful auras, disembodied voices, alternating states of tremendous anxiety and fear with exceptional hyperactivity and fearlessness, and dream-like trances while appearing to be conscious, followed by episodes of overwhelming and crippling fatigue that Tubman experienced (and observers noted) are classic symptoms of temporal lobe epilepsy. TLE visions often have religious overtones, a phenomenon Tubman experienced throughout her life. Sounds of music, rushing water, screaming and loud noises would overcome her without notice. Her dreams, visions, and hallucinations often intruded amid daily work and activities. "We'd been carting manure all day," Tubman once explained to an interviewer, "and t'other girl and I was gwine home on the sides of the cart, and another boy was driving, when suddenly I heard such music as filled all the air." Soon, she began to experience a powerful religious vision "which she described in language which sounded like the old prophets in its grand flow." Persistent shaking by

her fellow slaves brought her back to reality, though she protested that she hadn't been asleep at all.⁴⁹

Her frequent sleeping spells, periods of semi-consciousness with an inability to speak, hyper religiosity, paranormal experiences, and recurrent nightmares appear to have become integrated into the young woman's personality, a phenomenon not unknown in TLE. Unlike other forms of epilepsy, temporal lobe seizures do not include convulsions. In fact, the temporal lobes are associated with the sensory regions of the brain (which includes smell, taste, vision, and hearing), memory, and emotions, and therefore the seizures most often affect those sensory activities. Tubman's religiosity was unquestionably rooted in powerful Methodist evangelical teachings and was also a mystical and deeply personal spiritual experience. But it may have been enhanced by the epiphany-like manifestations of TLE seizures. Some of her dreams reflect the out-of-body encounters reported by some TLE patients. Such experiences reinforced her notions of an all powerful being that guided her throughout her life, protecting her and providing divine instruction. Tubman "used to dream of flying over fields and towns, and rivers and mountains, looking down upon them 'like a bird'."⁵⁰ She later viewed such experiences as harbingers of some future event or calamity; she claimed she had inherited this ability from her father, who "could always predict the weather, and that he foretold the Mexican war."⁵¹ Sarah Bradford noted that she could have written much of "the 'dreams and visions,'" but she had "thought best not to insert anything which, with any, might bring discredit upon the story." As Bradford put it, "when these turns of somnolency come upon Harriet, she imagines that her 'spirit' leaves her body, and visits other scenes and places, not only in this world, but in the world of spirits. And her ideas

of these scenes show, to say the least of it, a vividness of imagination seldom equaled in the soarings of the most cultivated minds.”⁵²

The visions Tubman experienced were central to her inner spirituality and reinforced religious beliefs nurtured through strong African cultural traditions and powerful evangelical thought. Tubman was forced to attend services held by Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, Anthony Thompson’s son, and who had been licensed as a local Methodist minister in 1828. In mandating the attention of his slaves, Dr. Thompson fulfilled what he believed to be his role as the benevolent caretaker and provider for the spiritual well being of his slaves. Ben and Rit Ross claimed Thompson was just “pretending to preach,” and was nothing but “a wolf in sheep’s clothing.”⁵³ (Frederick Douglass once noted upon the religious conversion of his master, Thomas Auld, that “slaveholders may sometimes have confidence in the piety of their slaves, but slaves seldom have confidence in the piety of their masters.”⁵⁴) Though they attended Thompson’s services, the Ross family may have also been influenced by Episcopal, Baptist and Catholic teachings. Tubman and her family likely participated in a variety of religious settings, and may have integrated a number of religious practices and ideas into their daily lives. The Pattisons, Thompsons and Brodess’s may have initially belonged to the Anglican and Episcopal churches in the Dorchester County; some of the white Keenes, Tubmans and Rosses were originally Catholic. Though Methodism made significant inroads into Dorchester County during the late 1790s and early 19th century, its secure presence in the area was only solidified by the 1820s and 1830s.

Tubman was known to fast on Fridays, a practice then typical of Catholics, though some Methodists and Episcopalians also followed this habit. Tubman told Bradford, her

parents abstained entirely from food on Fridays. "Good Friday, an' five Fridays hand gwine from Good Friday, my fader nebber eats or drinks, all day--fasting for de five bleeding wounds ob Jesus. All the oder Fridays ob de year he nebber eats till de sun goes down; den he takes a little tea an' a piece ob bread."⁵⁵ Bradford asked if Ben was a Catholic, but Tubman replied, "he does it for *conscience*; we was taught to do so down South. He says if he denies himself for the sufferings of his Lord an' Master, Jesus will sustain him."⁵⁶

The rise in evangelicalism, and its concentration on spiritual freedom, particularly in the early to mid nineteenth century, had potentially troubling consequences for slaveholders' interests. Slaves' access to religious instruction depended upon individual slaveholders, but it was generally allowed on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. To deny slaves the opportunity for religious experience was, for some masters, a violation of religious freedom and the much hoped for spiritual conversion of "heathens" within the evangelical tradition. During the early nineteenth century, free blacks began forming their own denominations within the Methodist tradition, establishing the African Methodist Episcopal and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches in Philadelphia and Baltimore.

In the early years of the 19th century, slaveholders became increasingly concerned about the possible subversive messages preached by black ministers, so many slaves were required, like Tubman's family, to attend the churches of their owners. In Bucktown, oral tradition suggests that Tubman, her family, and many of the area's free and enslaved blacks attended two other possible sites of worship. One was Bazzel's Methodist Episcopal Church, located on Bucktown Road, slightly southwest of the Bucktown

crossroads, and only half of a mile southeast of the Brodess property. Though the church was built in 1876, Tubman's family, it is reported, attended services at that location, perhaps in the woods directly behind the current church.⁵⁷

Scott's Chapel, slightly north on Bucktown Road, is also another historically significant church for the local African-American community.⁵⁸ Founded in 1812 as a Methodist church, slaves attended this church. Though the current building was constructed in 1891 on land donated to the church in 1858 by John Scott, the graveyard directly across the road contains headstones as early as 1792. Whatever her place of worship, there can be no doubt Tubman's faith was deep, and founded upon strong religious teachings, whether these were specifically Methodist, Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist, or of African origin. Thomas Garrett felt that he "never met with any person, of any color, who had more confidence in the voice of God, as spoken direct to her soul... and her faith in a Supreme Power truly was great."⁵⁹ The role that Evangelical Protestantism played in the lives of nineteenth-century slaves, particularly those living within the region where Harriet lived in her formative years, is crucial to understanding the elements of Tubman's spiritual strength and endurance. Religion was a relied upon support system within the African American community, both free and enslaved, many of whom daily endured threats to their lives, their family stability, to the existence of their very community. Although accessibility to religious meetings by slaves depended upon the slaveholders, it was generally allowed. Albert Raboteau argues that to "deny blacks the possibility of preaching or gathering for religious meetings would have violated the tradition of gospel freedom as understood by evangelical Protestants."⁶⁰ The role of evangelicalism in nineteenth century America is fundamental to any exploration of the

cultural and human complexities of slave and free communities alike, and is crucial to understanding Tubman.

In this oppressive environment, then, Tubman and her family found ways to negotiate the cruelties of slavery and lack of control in their lives. For Tubman, a fusion of an African worldview and evangelical Christian thought appeared seamless, though bewildering to those who knew her. Evangelical Methodism was one source of strength, blending smoothly with cultural and religious traditions that survived the middle passage from Africa. First generation Africans, like her grandmother Modesty Green, embodied a living African connection and memory for Tubman and her family. Tubman's religious fervor and trust in God to protect and guide her evolved from a fusion of these traditions.

In many ways, evangelical Protestantism represented a paradox in the antebellum South. On the one hand, many white Southerners who believed in slavery and accepted it as a cultural, economic, and institutional foundation of Southern society were deeply committed to the preaching and spiritual guidance evangelical Protestantism provided. On the other hand, evangelicalism sustained and fortified generations of enslaved African Americans, even while white preachers instructed them to remain subordinated to their masters. The adoption by African Americans such as Tubman of a religious ideology that helped to support white oppression and enslavement of Africans and African Americans is puzzling. For slaves, however, the spirit and meaning of biblical texts had a fluidity to them that allowed them to find support for a worldview shaped by African and American influences. African-American spirituals, for instance, reflect a clear belief in alternative meanings for Holy Scripture.⁶¹

Black evangelicals rejected white versions of the Bible; they believed that God intended to set them free, delivering them in “*this world*.”⁶² Black evangelicals rejected white versions of the Bible; they believed that God intended to set them free. According to Lawrence Levine’s study of slave songs, the “emphasis of the spirituals... was on the Old Testament and the exploits of the Hebrew children... that Daniel and David and Joshua and Jonah and Moses and Noah, all of whom fill the lines of the spirituals, were delivered in *this world*.”⁶³ Levine also argues that, while evangelical Protestantism did not protect slaves, per se, in the South, “it does not follow that the spiritual message of Protestantism failed as well... [for] [r]eligion is more than an institution.”⁶⁴

Levine and other historians have discussed the process by which existing cultural and spiritual belief systems from West Africa coexisted or interacted with Evangelical Protestantism and European Christianity in the slave quarters.⁶⁵ Levine argues “neither the slaves nor their African forebears ever drew modernity’s clear line between the sacred and the secular... Their spirituals indicate clearly that there *were* alternatives open to them - alternatives which they themselves fashioned out of the fusion of their African heritage and their new religion.”⁶⁶ For Tubman, this fusion appeared seamless, though bewildering to those who knew her. Sarah Bradford wrote, “I hardly know how to approach the subject of the spiritual experiences of my sable heroine. They seem to enter into the realm of the supernatural... Had I not... seen such remarkable instances of what seemed to be her direct intercourse with heaven, I should not dare risk my own character for veracity by making these things public in this manner.”⁶⁷

The increased attention on the morality of slavery during 1830s, 1840s and 1850s coincided with an explosion of religious renewal that focused on spiritual freedom.⁶⁸

Setting this movement apart from the more traditional, white-controlled Methodist Church was the emergence of free black women preachers, including Jarena Lee, Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, and Zilpha Elaw. Viewing themselves as “agents with power of their own,”⁶⁹ Elaw, Lee, Truth and Stewart relied on their belief that they were God’s instruments, much like Tubman, who, believed that “de Lord” had delivered her as she “*expected... when she prayed... [and] Jes’ so long as he wanted me, he would take keer of me, an’ when he didn’t want me no longer, I was ready to go.*”⁷⁰

Preaching at camp meetings throughout the Eastern Shore, Elaw and Lee operated quite successfully under the watchful eye of suspicious whites. Coming from black women, their words seemingly posed no threat to slaveholding elites. These women were able to preach messages of salvation and liberation with impunity, unlike their male brethren, who were often silenced through harassment or outright violence.⁷¹ Their prayers were powerful tools, guiding Tubman and her family to insulate themselves from Thompson’s messages to maintain patience and “obey your master.”⁷²

Maria Stewart, an early black female political and spiritual theorist, emerged as an important preacher in the Methodist Church during the early 1830’s, eventually becoming the first woman preacher to speak before mixed audiences of men and women. Her messages of female strength and spiritual authority resonated with many free Northern black women who were frustrated by their lack of control in their community and spiritual lives. Stewart suggested that God “makes use of feeble means sometimes to bring about his most exalted purposes.”⁷³ Messages like these may have had an important meaning for Tubman; in fact, Tubman believed that God used her for his own “exalted purposes”, to free slaves and irritate slave owners with her uncanny ability to

escape capture. The evangelicalism of the African Methodist Episcopal Church provided a very personal ideology for Tubman and sheds some light on the power of Tubman's religious fervor and trust in God to protect and guide her.

Women like Stewart not only challenged accepted notions about women's roles in society and in the church, but black women's rights to public discourse as well. They made female self-determination an important theme and they demanded a radical reexamination of the accepted notions of the spirituality of blacks. Zilpha Elaw and Jarena Lee both spoke at camp meetings along the Eastern Shore of Maryland and in Baltimore throughout the three decades prior to 1850. It seems highly probable that Tubman, her family, and others from her community heard them speak. Is this how Tubman first became cognizant of the possibilities of a "spiritual birthright."?⁷⁴

In Boston and New York, Stewart fearlessly confronted white society, damning slaveholders and complicit non-slave holding whites for their role in oppressing African Americans. "[H]ow very few are there among them that bestow one thought upon the benighted sons and daughters of Africa, who have enriched the soils of America with their tears and blood... Dark and dismal is the cloud that hangs over thee, for thy cruel wrongs and injuries to the fallen sons of Africa. The blood of her murdered ones cries to heaven for vengeance against thee. Thou art almost become drunken with the blood of her slain.... upon thee be their curse."⁷⁵ These African Methodist messages gave powerful witness to the rising awareness in the black community of the role the church could play in destroying slavery and racial oppression.

Zilpha Elaw and Jarena Lee both risked arrest, sale into slavery, and even death to preach in the South, often at camp meetings, but also at a variety of Methodist,

Presbyterian, and Baptist churches. Camp meetings were frequent and well attended by both whites and blacks in Talbot, Dorchester and Caroline counties on the Eastern Shore. Ennals Springs, located three miles from East New Market and ten miles northeast of Bucktown, was a popular site for camp meetings, with fresh water, shade trees and easy access was available by water and road. Notices appeared periodically in the local newspapers announcing the next camp meetings, some of which were sponsored by Methodist plantation owners on their own property. "A Camp Meeting will be commenced on the 12th of September next, in the woods of Mr. Levin Stephens, near Buck Town -- where there is a sufficiency of water, and where ample provisions will be made for horses."⁷⁶ Given the close proximity to the Brodesses plantation, Harriet's family could have attended camp meetings like this. William Cornish, a local slave who later fled to Canada, was allowed by his trustful owner to "go to Baltimore and stay a week or two, or to go to a camp meeting."⁷⁷ Jacob Johnson, for instance, was allowed by his Calvert County master to cross the Chesapeake in a canoe to attend a camp meeting at Taylor's Island in Dorchester County in August of 1828. After failing to return, Jacob's master posted a runaway notice in the local Cambridge, Maryland newspaper, where Jacob's free father was found to be living.⁷⁸

Many Maryland Whites had been concerned about free and enslaved blacks, "roaming abroad or meeting in numbers on Sunday," and legislation was often proposed to impose restrictions, though little resulted from it. Nat Turner's slave rebellion, in which nearly 200 whites and blacks were killed in Southampton County, Virginia in the summer of 1831, changed the nature of white/black relationships in the South, magnifying Southern slaveholders "worst nightmare"; being murdered by their enslaved

people while they slept.⁷⁹ For Dorchester County residents, however, Turner's attack only added to fears already festering in the community. In February of 1831, a few short months before Turner rose up against the slaveholders of Southampton County, a young slave woman by the name of Henny murdered her mistress, Betsy Thompson Insley. After having been refused "sausage for breakfast," and then complaining about it, the Dorchester newspapers recounted, Henny received a "slight whipping" from her master. After Mr. Hensley left the house in the morning, Henny threw lye in her mistress's face, butchered her with an ax and hid the body in a closet. Tried and convicted, Henny was hung to great fanfare in Cambridge the following June.⁸⁰ Although the community was traumatized by this event, and again by the Nat Turner revolt, there was a significant rise in the number of manumission directly after these two events. No doubt many slaveholders began to look at their enslaved people with a different understanding, and perhaps their fears and anxieties prompted many to relieve themselves of the situation.⁸¹ The Dorchester County Manumission records record a remarkable rise in manumissions and requests for freedom papers, required by whites of free blacks to prove they are free. In 1831 there were 54 such manumissions and requests for freedom papers, up from 36 the year before. In 1832, however, the number increased dramatically to 119. In this more restrictive environment, freedom papers were an absolute necessity; for slaveholders, manumission for some of their slaves answered their fears. For others, however, more sales to Southern slave traders relieved them of troubling fears that lingered.

Terribly proscribed already, new legislation was passed forbidding blacks to "assemble or attend meetings for religious purposes which were not conducted by a white

licensed clergyman or some respectable white of the neighborhood authorized by the clergy.”⁸² Even under these most restrictive of conditions, however, free and enslaved blacks found ways to absorb and negotiate the proselytizing and the proscribed messages they received from white ministers. The opportunity to gather at camp meetings allowed many family and friends to meet and spend time with one another, and to renew their faith and hope for deliverance from their bondage. Black Preachers, however, were not very welcome. While there were a few local black preachers, including Samuel Green (probably related to Tubman and her family), William and Joseph Cornish, and others, white ministers, either itinerant or local, were the norm. Those few black ministers who were allowed to preach on occasion, like Sam Green, found ways to send messages of deliverance without the white authorities understanding it. Bill, a runaway slave from the Eastern Shore, became an approved minister after he was caught and returned from his hiding place in Calais, Maine. Returning to the Eastern Shore “Bill’s arrival was hailed as a great triumph by the surrounding slave-owners, especially so when they were made acquainted with his sentiments of Northern negro freedom, and its horrors generally... Never did poor plantations ring out so many doleful changes on the horrors of the North, with Bill, poor Bill, for a standing example; and very soon he was exalted to a kind of exhorter or lay preacher among his colored brethren.”⁸³ Bill recognized that his only chance to keep himself from being sold into the Deep South was to play the repentant slave. Always looking for the next opportunity to run away again, Bill bided his time, and “while the masters were thus teaching over Bill’s back the horrors of Northern freedom and the North generally, Bill, wide awake, and adroit in manner, was instructing far more effectively in quite the opposite direction.”⁸⁴

Interestingly, whites on the Eastern Shore had long been wary of black ministers, and were often fearful that they could incite rebellion. In July 1830, local newspapers reported an “insurrection” of Blacks, though the incident actually involved two Black preachers who were believed to have incited rebellion, although nothing really happened. According to the *Cambridge Chronicle*, “supposed emissaries under the specious cloak (cloak) of religion, and in the character of Bethel Preachers, have been amongst us sowing the seeds of sedition, and inciting the blacks to rebel, and those misguided, infamous wretches had but few disciples and have made still fewer proselytes.”⁸⁵ A few local Blacks were imprisoned, and the matter was dropped. Reverend Noah C.W. Cannon, an A.M.E. minister from Baltimore, came under suspicion for the murder of “several women and children” in Cambridge. Though Cannon was dark-skinned and the suspected perpetrator a “bright mulatto,” Caroline County officials attempted to arrest him. Suspicious of “movements they supposed were going on among the colored people,” the authorities assumed the troublemaker was Cannon, an itinerant black preacher.⁸⁶

Zilpha Elaw, a free black Philadelphian, became convinced in 1819 that she had been called to preach. She claimed that “Christ sen[t] women to inform the disciples and Peter, that he had risen from the dead... that [therefore] the first preachers of the resurrection were women.”⁸⁷ In 1828, Elaw left Philadelphia to preach in Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia.⁸⁸ Though she risked enslavement, many whites did not apparently consider her a threat. The slaveholders, she wrote, “thought it surpassingly strange that a person (and a female) belonging to the same family stock with their poor debased, uneducated, coloured slaves, should come into their territories and teach the

enlightened proprietors the knowledge of God.”⁸⁹ Elaw had no doubt “but God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty.”⁹⁰

During the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s Jarena Lee spoke at camp meetings from Cape May, New Jersey, to southern Maryland, to Philadelphia, Baltimore, and extensively throughout the Eastern Shore. In 1824, Lee spoke at camp meetings in Concord and Easton, then Denton, Maryland, less than 30 miles from Bucktown. She continued past Bucktown to the southern part of the state, to Salisbury and Snow Hill, preaching to “slaves and the holders,” in predominantly black churches, remarking that “they came seven miles’ distance from only three or four hours’ notice.”⁹¹ Writing of another Camp meeting, Lee noted that many slaves walked twenty and thirty or more miles to come to meetings, knowing they had to return the same number of miles to be ready to work the next day.⁹² She repeatedly wrote of the comfort and power she found in the scriptures, feeling “so much of life and liberty in the word.”⁹³ Lee was not without her problems, however. On at least one occasion, the authorities in Greenesboro, Caroline County sought to have her thrown in jail. Assuming she had no freedom papers (a certificate issued to free blacks – sometimes required for travel in slaveholding regions), they eagerly waited for her to “say something to implicate myself”; the local magistrate, however, “was bound to protect her,” and allowed her to continue preaching.⁹⁴ She prayed “God to forward on the work of abolition until it fills the world,” and “as we are all children of one parent, no one is justified in holding slaves.”⁹⁵

The preaching’s of Lee, Elaw and Stewart, and others suggest ways that Harriet Tubman experienced Christianity and sheds light on the possible sources for her emotional and intellectual strength. Within evangelical Protestantism, these activist

women provided an intellectual and spiritual framework that may have informed Tubman's life, and contributed to her individual acts of resistance. Tubman did not necessarily have to hear Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, or Maria Stewart to share their ideologies and religious sensibilities. What is most important is not what Lee and Elaw may have said to incite resistance or rebellion, but what they represented for women as spiritual and intellectual beings. We cannot be sure where Tubman acquired her spiritual inspiration, or how she came to know scripture by heart. We can assume that she experienced a spiritual awakening sometime in her adolescent years, perhaps as a natural progression of teachings heard at white Methodist services, camp meetings, at clandestine services in the woods near the present day Bazzel Church in Bucktown, or in the slave quarters. Religious expression was a very personal experience for Tubman, however. When invited to join in prayers with a white master's family, "she preferred to stay on the landing, and pray for herself." Praying for strength to make her "able to fight," Tubman's pleadings became her own private rebellion.⁹⁶ Tubman believed that her repeated attempts to retrieve enslaved blacks from the South were a "holy crusade" and that her God was the same God that so moved Elaw, Lee, and Stewart.

Hillary McD. Beckles argues that most scholars have looked at women as indirect participants in protest and rebellion. Beckles states "women's behaviour is particularly vulnerable to the ideological charge that actions emanate from some place other than the cerebral."⁹⁷ This has been particularly true of scholarship about Tubman. However, it took rational, calm planning to effect escapes repeatedly and against the obstacles that Tubman faced. The intellectual and physical preparation that was required of her has not

been recognized, and it is through her spirituality that we can recognize at least one source of her strength to face life's traumas.

Tubman's intellectual and spiritual lives can now be examined beyond the delimiting and carefully circumscribed notions of 19th century black womanhood. The evolution of Tubman's narrative reveals how late nineteenth and twentieth century racial and gendered discourse defines Tubman's place and identity. Tubman's illiteracy is a major contributing factor in the construction of her identity. Then, as now, literacy was a marker for class status and intelligence; Tubman's illiteracy was viewed as a liability. Tubman's religious life allowed her to claim respectability and authority when few such options were available to black women. Therefore, much of Tubman's intellectual life has been muted in deference to a highly mythologized spiritual life.

At the same time, however, it is also the nation's secular inflexibility that contributes to a devaluing and misinterpretation of the importance of religion and its defining influence in African-American life. According to William Still, Harriet Tubman's courage and "utter disregard of consequences" elevated her to the status of Moses. "[W]holly devoid of fear," he identified Tubman within a long tradition of resistance, a tradition that may help explain at least part of her view of the world.⁹⁸ The influence of this fusion of African cultural and spiritual ideology and Evangelical Protestantism, particularly its female voices, on Tubman's life has been lost in the retelling of her narrative. While her spirituality is a staple of her iconography, it is these intricate patterns of influence, from West African belief systems to the specific messages of evangelical women that have been neglected or lost over time. As Moira Ferguson has noted, "[r]eligion was frequently a goal and a tool, as well as fortification."⁹⁹ For Tubman

and her family, it helped them survive the turmoil of the slave system that afforded them no control over their futures.

Disabled and weakened from her severe head injury and from years of harsh treatment and neglect from temporary masters, often stricken with severe headaches that prevented her from working, Tubman's productivity declined significantly. Her worth to Brodess greatly diminished, and though he tried to sell her while she recovered from her head injury, her ill health precluded any interested buyers. Indeed, Anthony Thompson remarked in his deposition in 1853 that "Minty" was not worth much, as she was "always sickly."¹⁰⁰ "I grew up like a neglected weed," Harriet once told an interviewer, "not happy or contented: every time I saw a white man I was afraid of being carried away."¹⁰¹ Tubman would regain her strength, however, and mature into an accomplished worker, hiring her own time after paying Brodess a set wage for the year, and setting the stage for her own deliverance from slavery. "Slavery," she said, "is the next thing to hell."¹⁰²

CHAPTER THREE NOTES

¹ Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney, "Moses," *Freedmen's Record*, March 1865.

² Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 9

³ William Still, The Underground Railroad. (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., rpt. edition 1970). 307.

⁴ Interviews with "John Seward" [Robert Ross] and "James Seward" [Ben Ross], in Benjamin Drew, . The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery rpt. 1969, Tilden G. Edelstein, ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1855). 27.

⁵ Bradford, Scenes. 73. An examination of the 1830 census indicates that Cook lived perhaps three miles from the Brodess plantation, next door to Brodess's cousin and uncle, both named Gourney Crow Pattison. The difference in distance could be simply a child's memory, or that Bradford mistook "two" for "ten." There are numerous occasions where she has made similar errors. In the census, Cook is listed as the head of a household of seven slaves and four whites. This includes two male slaves under the age of ten, one between ten and twenty four, and one between fifty-five and one hundred years old, and four female slaves, including one under ten, one between ten and twenty four, one between twenty-four and thirty-six, and one from thirty-six to fifty-five. Cook's own family included one white woman between twenty and thirty and two boys under the age of five. It appears that Cook rented this property. He could have been an overseer for Thomas J.H. Eccleston, a very large and wealthy landowner in that area. Some of the slaves in Cook's household could have been hired by Cook.

⁶ Emma P. Telford. "Harriet: The Modern Moses of Heroism and Visions," Cayuga County Museum, Auburn, NY: circa 1905. 4 "When we got dere," Tubman recalled, "day was at table eatin' supper. I'neber eat in de house where de white people wuz, an' I was shamed to stan' up and eat befo' dem."

⁷ Telford. "Harriet," 4. "I was as fond of milk as any young shote. But all de time I was dere I stuck to it, dat I didn't drink sweet milk."

⁸ Bradford, Scenes. 73. Franklin Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, July 17, 1863. Sanborn's article actually appears verbatim in both of Bradford's biographies. Valued for their pelts, muskrats were trapped also for their meat. See Frank R. Smith. "Muskrat Investigations in Dorchester County, Md, 1930-1934," United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.:

⁹ Telford. "Harriet," 4 "I useter sleep' on de flo' in front ob de fireplace an 'dar I'd lie and 'cry an 'cry. I useter tink all the time ef I could only git home an 'git in my mudder's bed, an 'de funny part of dat was, she nebber had a bade in her life. Nuffin but a board box nailed up agin de wall an 'straw laid on it."

¹⁰ Bradford, Scenes. 73-74

¹¹ Telford. "Harriet," 4 "... like de boy on de Swanee Ribber, 'no place I lake my ole cabin home.' Whenever you saw a chile wasser homesick dan I wuz, you see a bad one."

¹² Bradford, Scenes. 10-11.

¹³ Bradford, Scenes. 10-11. According to Sarah Bradford, however, this was Tubman's first experience away from home.

¹⁴ Bradford, Scenes. 11-12.

¹⁵ Whether "Miss Susan" and "Miss Emily" are fictitious names or the actual names of the women in Bradford's version of Tubman's first experience away from home is not known. Efforts to identify Susan and Emily have proved frustrating. While there are many such sister combinations, additional research indicates that a couple of possibilities are more likely than others. One of the more intriguing possibilities includes Susan and Amelia Keene, who are related to Eliza Ann Keene Brodess. Amelia was married to Charles Tubman in 1816. Charles Tubman lived next door to Eliza Keene's parents. The other possibility is Susan Dawson Thompson, Dr. Anthony Thompson's second wife, and her sister Emily.

¹⁶ Bradford, Scenes. 13. "An dat baby was allus in my lap 'capt when it was asleep, or its mother was feedin' it."

¹⁷ Bradford, Scenes. 13

¹⁸ Samuel Hopkins Adams, Grandfather Stories. (New York: Random House, 1947). 274

¹⁹ Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: J.J. Little & Co., 1901). There is an additional chapter added to this edition of Bradford's 1886 biography, entitled "Some Additional Incidents in the Life of 'Harriet,'" Here, Bradford includes new stories as told by Tubman that were not included in the earlier biographies. "An dat sugar, right by me, did look so nice, an' my Missus's back was turned to me while she was fightin' wid her husband, so I jes put my fingers in de sugar bowl to take one lump, an maybe she heard me, an' she turned and saw me. De nex' minute she had de raw hide down; I give one jump out of de do', and I saw dey came after me, but I jes' flew, and dey didn't catch me. I run, an' run, an' I run, I passed many a house, but I didn't dar' to stop, for dey all knew my Missus an' dey would send me back." 135-136.

²⁰ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. 137. "I was so starved I knowed I'd got to go back to my Missus, I hadn't got no whar else to go, but I knowed what was comin."

²¹ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Reel 1, Box 3 folder d2. NYPL - Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. New York.. Bowley to Conrad, August 8, 1939.

²² "Harkless Bowley Letters." August 8, 1939.

²³ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."

²⁴ Sarah Bradford wrote her biography of Tubman "in haste," as she was preparing to sail for Europe in the fall of 1868. She incorporated Sanborn's full-length article from the *Commonwealth* into her biographies, which amounted to 15 pages of the 132 pages in the book. In fact, Bradford wrote only about fifty pages of narrative herself; the rest is taken from articles written by others like Sanborn, and letters from supportive friends who knew Tubman through the Anti-slavery movement and the Civil War.

²⁵ Telford. "Harriet,"

²⁶ Bradford, Scenes. 13.

²⁷ Marie Jenkins Schwartz, Born in Bondage: Growing up Enslaved in the Antebellum South. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000). 158

²⁸ Brenda E. Stevenson, Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). 184

²⁹ William Still, The Underground Railroad. (1871; Reprint, Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1970).

³⁰ Testimony of Polish Mills, in "Gourney C. Pattison, William Pattison and Others Vs. Eliza Brodess, Eliza Brodess and John Mills Administrators of Edward Brodess, and Thomas Willis." Dorchester County Circuit Court (Equity papers). MDSA. Annapolis.

³¹ "Case 249."

³² "Aunt Harriet Was Very Old," *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, Auburn, NY, March 12, 1913.

³³ John P. Pratt, "Spectacular Meteor Shower Might Repeat," *Meridian Magazine*, October 15, 1999.

³⁴ "Meteor Shower." Harrison Collection, MS 432. Box 4. Maryland Historical Society. Baltimore, MD.

³⁵ "Aunt Harriet Was Very Old." This meteoric event was the result of debris shed by the comet Tempel-Tuttle. Normally occurring every 33 years, the meteor "storm" caused by the passing of this comet near the earth in 1833 was by far the most spectacular. According to Samuel Harrison of Talbot County, "superstition attached a disastrous meaning to this appearance. The end of the world was thought to be drawing near." He also wrote that he was "under the impression that religious awe was the feeling inspired in most minds at the time." See "Meteor Shower."

³⁶ The identity of this temporary master is not known.

³⁷ Telford. "Harriet," 5

³⁸ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman."; see also Bradford, Scenes. (74.

³⁹ Thomas Barnett, Jr, who married Eliza Pitt in 1833, later owned a plantation on the road from Airey's to Bucktown, perhaps a mile and a half east and north of the Brodess property.

⁴⁰ There may have been at least two stores located at this crossroads, in addition to a blacksmith shop. An old former store of unknown date still stands at the crossroads, facing Greenbrier Road, on property now owned by the Meredith family. Architectural historians have been unable to determine the exact age of the building, though it is suspected that parts of it exist from the mid 19th century, and perhaps earlier. The interior, though dated to perhaps after the Civil War period, it is probably reminiscent of drygoods stores of the antebellum period. Barnett's property was also located near Pritchett Meredith's farm in Bucktown. Later, in 1857 several of Meredith's slaves fled, guided by their former neighbor, Harriet Tubman.

⁴¹ Telford. "Harriet," 6. "I had a shoulder shawl' ob de mistis' ober my haid an' when I got to do sto' I was shamed to go in, an 'said de' oberseer raisin' up his arm to throw an iron weight at one o de slaves an 'dat wuz de las' I knew... broke my skull and cut a piece ob dat shawl clean off and druv it into my haid. Dey carried me to de house all bleedin an 'faintin. I had no baid, no place to lie down on at all, an 'dey lay me on de seat ob de loom, an 'I stayed dere all dat day an 'nex'... I went to wuk again an 'dere I wukked wid de blood an 'sweat rollin' down my face till I couldn't see."

⁴² Bradford, Scenes. (13-14.

⁴³ "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'." Franklin B. Sanborn Papers. Box 1, Folder 5. Box 1, Folder 5, American Antiquarian Society. Worcester, MA.

⁴⁴ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman."; see also Bradford, Scenes. (75.

⁴⁵ Bradford, Scenes. (13

⁴⁶ Cheney, "Moses."; see also Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman."

⁴⁷ "Papers." Earl Conrad Papers. Bourke Memorial Library, Cayuga Community College. Auburn, N.Y. ; Earl Conrad, Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Microfilm, 2 reels vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: The New York Public Library. Letter, Wilbur Seibert to Earl Conrad, September 4, 1939. Roll 1, Box 2, folder 39.

⁴⁸ Temporal Lobe Epilepsy is a complex and varied disease of the brain. Not all instances of TLE are precipitated by a brain injury, though often this is the case. There is a significant body of literature devoted to the study and treatment of TLE. Most of it is covered in medical and clinical journals for physicians and researchers; but a small body of research extends the knowledge gleaned from these reports and studies to the fields of history and social studies. Some scholars are now looking at the possibilities that some of history's great leaders and artists have suffered from this disease. Based on my research in clinical journals and research reports, Tubman exhibited a large number of symptoms associated with TLE. In particular, epilepsy patients sometimes develop an unusually profound reaction and interest in religion, in addition to other more visual and auditory symptoms. See the following for brief discussions of TLE diagnoses and symptoms: M. Ohtsu, H. Oguni, Y. Awaya, and M. Osawa, "No to Hattatsu. Brain and Development: Clinical Study on Epileptic Aura in Children with Temporal Lobe Epilepsy.," Vol. 33, no. Issue 5(2001);; Jamie Talan, "Religion: Is It All in Your Head?," *Psychology Today* vol. 31 March/April, (1998);; Sharon and Anne Underwood Begley, "Religion and the Brain," *Newsweek*, May 7,. 50.; Vernon M. Neppe, MD, *Possible Temporal Lobe Symptoms* (Pacific Neuropsychiatric Institute, 1997 [cited <http://www.pni.org/neuropsychiatry/seizures/ptls.html>]); and Richard Restak, MD, "Complex Partial Seizures Present Diagnostic Challenge," *Psychiatric Times*, September.; J. Bancaud, F. Brunet-Bourgin, P. Chauvel, and E. Halgren, "Anatomical Origin of Deja-Vu and Vivid "Memories" in Human Temporal Lobe Epilepsy.," *Brain* 117, no. 1 February, (1994): 71-90.

⁴⁹ Cheney, "Moses." See also John W. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977). 457-465.

⁵⁰ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman."

⁵¹ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman." See also Bradford, Scenes. (79-80.

⁵² Bradford, Scenes. (56

⁵³ Still, The Underground Railroad. (411.

⁵⁴ Frederick Douglass, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass. (1882; Reprint, 2001). Scituate, MA: Digital Scanning, Inc., 2001). 133.

⁵⁵ Bradford, Scenes. (108-109

⁵⁶ Bradford, Scenes. (108-109

⁵⁷ In fact, a smaller building to the rear of the existing church, may actually pre-date the church itself.

⁵⁸ This church is also known as Bucktown United Methodist Church

⁵⁹ Bradford, Scenes. (49.

⁶⁰ Albert J. Raboteau, "The Black Experience in American Evangelicalism," in Timothy E. Fulop, and Albert J. Raboteau, ed., African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture (New York: Routledge, 1997). 94.

⁶¹ For in depth and detailed discussions of African American religious life, see Albert J. Raboteau, Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; Albert J. Raboteau, A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African American Religious History. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995; and Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau, eds., African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture. New York: Routledge, 1997; Lawrence Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977; Mechal Sobel, The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth Century Virginia. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987; Sylvia Frey, Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991, and Frey and Betty Wood, Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998; Nell Painter, Sojourner Truth, A Life A Symbol, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996; Eugene D. Genovese, Roll, Jordon, Roll: The World the Slaves Made. (New York: Vintage Books, 1976); Milton C. Sernett, ed., African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).; Charles Joyner, Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1984). 141-171.; Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). 129-163, 225-256.; and Christine Leigh Heyrman, Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁶² Lawrence W. Levine, "Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness," in African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture., ed. Timothy E. Fulop, and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Routledge, 1997). 78

⁶³ Lawrence Levine, "Slave Songs and Slave Consciousness," in Fulop, ed., African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture. 78

⁶⁴ Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). 81.

⁶⁵ See Albert J. Raboteau, Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; Albert J. Raboteau, A Fire in the Bones: Reflections on African American Religious History. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995; and Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau, eds., African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture. New York: Routledge, 1997; Lawrence Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro American Folk Thought From Slavery to Freedom. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977; Mechal Sobel, The World They Made Together: Black and White Values in Eighteenth Century Virginia. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987; Sylvia Frey, Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991, and Frey and Betty Wood, Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998; Nell Painter, Sojourner Truth, A Life A Symbol, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996.

⁶⁶ Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom. (73.

⁶⁷ Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Sons, 1886). 75-76.

⁶⁸ Moira Ferguson, ed., Nine Black Women. An Anthology of Nineteenth-Century Writers from the United States, Canada, Bermuda, and the Caribbean. (New York: Routledge, 1998). 145

⁶⁹ Ferguson, ed., Nine Black Women. 145.

⁷⁰ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 61.

⁷¹ Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers Schomburg, "Six Women's Slave Narratives," ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).; Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers Schomburg, "Spritual Narratives," ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).; William L. Andrews, To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).; William L. Andrews, ed., Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women's Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986).; Mary Grimley and Carol Hurd Green Mason, ed., Journeys: Autobiographical Writings by Women (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1979).; Ferguson, ed., Nine Black Women.; Frances Smith Foster, Written by

Herself. Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892. (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993).; Carla L. Peterson, "Doers of the Word": African American Women Speakers and Writers in the North, 1830-1880. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

⁷² Peter Randolph, Slave Cabin in the Pulpit. (Boston: Privately Printed, 1893).)

⁷³ Maria Stewart, "Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart," in Spiritual Narratives, ed. The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth Century Black Women Writers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). 76-77.

⁷⁴ Andrews, ed., Sisters of the Spirit. 1

⁷⁵ Stewart, "Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart." 12, 18.

⁷⁶ "Notice [August 30, 1828]," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Cambridge, MD, August 30, 1828. 4.

⁷⁷ Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony. 423-426.

⁷⁸ "Reward," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Cambridge, MD, September 8, 1828. 3

⁷⁹ Kenneth S. Greenberg, The Confessions of Nat Turner and Related Documents. (New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996). 26.

⁸⁰ "Execution of Henny, in Cambridge, in 1831." Dorchester County Historical Society, Veritcal Files. F213A. Dorchester County Public Library. Cambridge, MD..

⁸¹ "Certificates of Freedom." Dorchester County Circuit Court Records. MDSA. Annapolis, MD; Dorchester County Court, Chattel Records. (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives.)

⁸² Jeffrey R. Brackett, The Negro in Maryland. A Study of the Institution of Slavery. (1889; Reprint, 1969). New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969). 199

⁸³ Ethiop, "The Early Days of the Underground Railroad," *Anglo African Magazine*, October 1859. 323.

⁸⁴ Ethiop, "The Early Days of the Underground Railroad." 321-324.

⁸⁵ Kay Najiyyah McElvey, "Early Black Dorchester, 1776-1870: A History of the Struggle of African Americans in Dorchester County, Maryland, to Be Free to Make Their Own Choices." (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1991). 270.

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- ⁸⁶ A.W. Wayman, My Recollections of African M.E. Ministers, or Forty Years Experience in the African Methodist Church. (Philadelphia: A.M.E. Book Rooms, 1881). 7-11.
- ⁸⁷ Andrews, ed., Sisters of the Spirit. 91.
- ⁸⁸ Andrews, ed., Sisters of the Spirit. 91.
- ⁸⁹ Andrews, ed., Sisters of the Spirit. 92.
- ⁹⁰ Andrews, ed., Sisters of the Spirit. 92.
- ⁹¹ Jareena Lee, "Religious Experience and Spiritual Journal of Mrs. Jareena Lee, Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel," in Spiritual Narratives, ed. Henry Louis Gates, The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers (New York: Oxford University Press). 37.
- ⁹² Lee, "Religious." 41.
- ⁹³ Lee, "Religious." 41.
- ⁹⁴ Lee, "Religious." 36-37.
- ⁹⁵ Lee, "Religious." 90.
- ⁹⁶ Cheney, "Moses." 34.
- ⁹⁷ Hilary McD. Beckles, ed., Taking Liberties: Enslaved Women and Antislavery in the Caribbean, Gender and Imperialism (New York: Manchester University Press, 1998). 150.
- ⁹⁸ Still, Underground Railroad. 306.
- ⁹⁹ Ferguson, ed., Nine Black Women. 145
- ¹⁰⁰ "Thompson Deposition." Equity Papers 249. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.
- ¹⁰¹ Benjamin Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. (1855; Reprint, Tilden G. Edelstein, ed. Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, MA: 1969). 20
- ¹⁰² Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. 20.

CHAPTER IV

“SHADOW OF A VOICE IN THE TALKING LEAVES”: THE HIDDEN WORLD OF BLACK COMMUNICATION¹

Though Harriet Tubman returned to the fields immediately after the blow to her head that nearly killed her, her temporary master soon returned her to Edward Brodess when it became apparent that the young slave girl was virtually useless to him as a productive slave.² Brodess, frustrated with such complications and needing to support his growing family, realized the extent of her injuries was beyond anything he cared to handle. Rit pleaded with Brodess to let her nurse Harriet's broken body back to health. Over the following months, Harriet struggled to regain her strength and resume a productive life. Under the care of her mother and other members of the community, including, perhaps, medical care from Dr. Anthony C. Thompson who was then living in the Cambridge area, Harriet's head injury slowly healed.³ The severity of the blow to her head, the crushing of her skull and the bruising of her brain, left her deeply scarred and subject to tremendous headaches, often leaving her listless and lethargic. Her ability to work fluctuated over time; headaches and seizures occasionally prevented her from performing assigned tasks, labeling her an unreliable slave. Brodess attempted to sell her on various occasions during this time period, but no buyer, apparently, could be found.

After Harriet had sufficiently recovered, presumably in the spring of 1835 or 1836, Brodess hired her out to a John T. Stewart, with whom she lived for “five or six” years.⁴ This was probably John Trevalian Stewart, the son of Joseph Stewart, a prominent

shipbuilder, merchant, and slaveholder in the Tobacco Stick area of Dorchester County.⁵ Joseph was the brother of Levin Stewart, who, it should be recalled, had owned and provided for the manumission of all of his slaves, including the Bowley family, before he moved to Georgetown in 1820.⁶ When Levin Stewart died in 1826, Joseph Stewart purchased or assumed control of many of his brother's slaves, granting the manumissions that Levin executed for staggered dates beginning in the late 1810s.⁷

Tubman's work assignments may have varied considerably while working for Stewart. His father's 225 acre plantation sat upon the north side of Tobacco Stick Bay, west of Church Creek and Cambridge, extending along the shore line "for a considerable extent down the creek," terminating at the road not far from the mouth of Stewart's Canal. The plantation included tillable acreage of wheat and corn, a shipyard, a store, windmill, a "work house," and two blacksmith shops, in addition to a main residence and assorted outbuildings, including, presumably, slave cabins.⁸ The Stewart's mercantile, farm, shipbuilding and lumbering businesses required the labor of many people, including slaves and freemen, with varying levels of ability, from highly skilled blacksmiths, to ship carpenters and sail makers, sawyers and timber inspectors, stevedores and drivers, to farm laborers. John T. Stewart probably operated the store and managed the lumbering operations connected with this property during the mid to late 1830s for his father, and then later for himself during the early 1840s after his father had died. Here Tubman "worked in the house," first, where, she later told a friend, "she would beat up the feather beds, make believe she was working hard, and when she had blown them up she would throw herself in the middle of them."⁹ She may have also labored in Stewart's store, hauling goods to and from the wharves along the shore of

Tobacco Stick Bay, or packing and hauling grain milled at the Stewart's windmill. She lifted "huge barrels" loaded with goods bound for the market, and pulled heavily laden boats through the canal system "like an ox."¹⁰

She was eventually employed in the fields and woods, in the "rudest of labors, - drove oxen, carted, and plowed and did all the work of a man."¹¹ Working in the woods, Harriet cut sometimes half a cord a day.¹² She hauled logs, and reportedly was the marvel of her white master, who "would often exhibit her feats of strength to his friends."¹³ Though it is not entirely clear from Franklin Sanborn or Sarah Bradford's interviews, it appears that Tubman was proud of her physical strength and prowess, particularly in work assignments that were traditionally, according to white northern abolitionists, assigned to men. Escaping the "petty tyranny" of the household may have been the source of Tubman's own motivations, especially in light of the horrible treatment she received as a child at the hands of intolerant and exacting mistresses.¹⁵ Jacqueline Jones argues in her work on black women's labor under slavery, that the women themselves did not always view domestic work for enslaved women in a positive light.¹⁶ The close scrutiny of mistresses and masters within the household, the tremendous variety of tasks required, and the sometimes dangerous sexual vulnerability household servants were exposed to, led many slave women to prefer outdoor work. Slave women were not accorded the same courtesies as white women, however. Masters made little differentiation between work assignments: slave women, particularly those on smaller farms and plantations, were expected to work in the fields and contribute to household production and other domestic chores, while white women remained focused on household work. Regardless, most slaveholders were primarily concerned with

economic success, and this often meant that most hands, both male and female, worked in the fields. White mistresses, unless they were elite women with large household staffs, also participated in household production, worked with their enslaved women in contributing to the functioning of the household.¹⁸

In Edward and Eliza Brodess's household, the division of labor was less clearly defined. Rit may have worked for Eliza at times, but the fact that Rit and her daughter Linah were both hired out in 1833 raises the question of who was helping Eliza run her busy and growing household. Though little is written about Rit in the various narratives and interviews of Harriet Tubman, it appears that she may have been primarily a cook and domestic servant, though we cannot discount the possibility that she labored in the fields for Brodess or for temporary masters to whom she had been hired. With four young boys at home, including one infant, Eliza Brodess needed the help of an experienced house servant. Harriet's sister, Soph, may have been assigned domestic duty within the household; at eighteen she was old enough to shoulder the responsibilities of running the household.¹⁹ Edward's small farm did not necessarily need the field labor of his enslaved women; he had plenty of male slaves to work the fields. On the other hand, the money Brodess could earn by hiring out his male slaves, a fee nearly double what he could earn from his female slaves, may have been more attractive, on balance, than using all of them on his own farm.²⁰

Working for John T. Stewart also allowed Harriet to be closer to her father, who lived and labored just south of Tobacco Stick in the Peter's Neck area near the Big Blackwater River, and it was here that Harriet earned her reputation as an able-bodied worker. Tubman seemed to take pride in her ability to labor productively in the fields.

She claimed to have loved “great physical activity,”²³ and noted that the “amount exacted of a woman for her time was fifty or sixty dollars, —of a man, one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars,” implying that she was worth what a man could earn for himself or his master.²⁴ Ross had been manumitted by Anthony Thompson’s will in 1840, and was now a free to work for wages. Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, though he was by that time quickly divesting himself of his father’s lands in the area, probably continued to employ Ben on his remaining landholdings. Timber from the interior of Dorchester County was still being harvested and hauled to Tobacco Stick via Stewart’s Canal, which was completed sometime in the 1830s. Joseph Stewart owned several tracks in this region, having purchased several parcels of property from Thompson’s estate in 1837. Purchasing Thompson’s land, and acquiring the labor of Thompson’s former slaves and those free blacks living and working in the area allowed for little interruption in harvesting and distribution of timber and agricultural products. For the black people in this community, it represented continuity to their lives, economically and socially. Hiring Ben was a logical and probably a desirable thing to do; Ross was familiar with the territory and the work, and Joseph Stewart’s own shipbuilding and merchant shipping business required the experience of a master timber cutter and foreman such as Ross. According to Sanborn, Stewart “was a builder, and for the work of Ross used to receive as much as five dollars a day sometimes, he being a superior workman.”²⁵

A dense community of slave and free black families, brought together by virtue of their work patterns and the social interactions of their white masters and employers, was home to Ben Ross. This community was ultimately the social world of Harriet Tubman

and her family, as well, even though their owner, Edward Brodess, lived several miles to the southeast near Bucktown.²⁶ In fact, Anthony Thompson's home at the end of Harrisville road near the Big Blackwater River was surrounded by many free black households, some of whom may have been former Thompson slaves; others, like Simon Ross who was born free but who may have been a blood relative to Ben Ross, also lived here, constituting another part of this dynamic black community whose labor supported the commercial and agricultural aspirations of the area's white landowners.

Throughout the antebellum period, Cambridge and Dorchester County continued to expand economically, adjusting to the changing markets in fisheries, timber and agriculture. Many of the wealthiest white citizens owned property in several counties, and moved about quite often between their various landholdings and the local towns and cities. But this patchwork of land ownership opened lines of communication for the black community as well; as slaveholders their slaves from one location to the other, depending upon the season and the nature of the operations on particular pieces of property, they fostered the establishment of widely dispersed communication networks. These lines fed in turn to larger networks connected to the sea, as growth "opened new avenues of mobility," by means of a diverse group of maritime professionals, from ferrymen to experienced navigators, from single boatmen to crews manning large schooners, to stevedores and other dock workers, ship carpenters and caulkers. All contributed to a "web of commerce.... [which provided] channels of communication," throughout the Chesapeake and beyond.²⁷ Even in remote Dorchester County, new commercial links which required a constant flow of ships and boats of all sizes, and

seamen and watermen of different races, to provide and operate a dependable network of “coastal vessels and skilled sailors to support their busy markets.”²⁸

The towns and villages that were settled in this area were devoted to merchant shipping and shipbuilding, providing the market for the timber, shingles, staves, boards and wood pulp. Below the Little Choptank River, and traversed by the Big Blackwater River in the Peter’s Neck region, stood great swaths of thick virgin forest, so dense visitors imagined them to be towering black walls of great fortresses. During the eighteenth century, the timber brought out from this region was floated through a circuitous route south through the Blackwater River to Fishing Bay at the mouth of the Transquaking and Nanticoke Rivers. This route may have been less than ideal, although in the absence of a northerly transportation route, it was the only option available. It did not provide for easy transportation of timber from deeper in the interior. Those entrepreneurs who settled along the Little Choptank north of the Blackwater River quickly sought a more direct route for accessing and transporting the county’s rich lumber, and then later, bountiful agricultural products. A canal, they thought, would provide that route.

Joseph Stewart, who purchased hundreds of acres of Anthony Thompson’s former landholdings in the Harrisville and Peter’s Neck area in 1837 was one of the more successful businessmen in that area of Dorchester County.²⁹ He was instrumental in the building and completing of what became known as Stewart’s Canal throughout the late 1820s and early 1830s. The canal connected the Big Blackwater River to Parsons Creek to the northwest and Tobacco Stick Bay to the northeast, easing the transportation of timber from the interior of the Blackwater region to the shipyards and merchants on the

water. Timber could be floated freely or by barge to local shipbuilders, or to waiting merchants contracted to ship logs, planks, shingles and staves to Baltimore, Annapolis, Norfolk, and New England, where shipbuilders and other manufacturers prized the Eastern Shore's sturdy white oak, often used for keels, and abundant white and yellow pine.³⁰ Stewart trained and employed numerous slaves and free white and black labor in his own shipyard. Teams of oxen and scores of men dragged the huge cut trees along logging roads carved out of the dense forests. Icy and slippery in the winter and spring, stifling hot and humid in the summer and fall, the work required the stamina and strength of young healthy slaves and freemen alike. With the canal, the difficult task of hauling the region's white oak, walnut, and pine was somewhat alleviated, creating increased supply for the area's shipbuilders and lumber merchants. Farmers also quickly took advantage of these canals to ship agricultural products from the area's rapidly expanding farms.

The construction of this canal required enormous numbers of laborers. Many enslaved workers, drawn from such areas as Slaughter Creek, Parsons Creek, Tobacco Stick, and Church Creek, and owned by white slaveholders such as Anthony Thompson and Joseph Stewart, cleared and dug this canal. Begun in the late 1810s, the canal was not completed until the early to mid 1830s. It was incredibly difficult work; canal workers toiled in water all day, digging, dredging, and tearing out hundreds of acres of marshland, forest, and swamp. Disease was rampant and the mortality rate extremely high. Unlike canals built in the north by free, and mostly immigrant labor, the great majority of workers who built Southern canals were enslaved laborers. Free white and black workers rarely risked the high injury and death rate common among canal builders.

Some slave owners, too, were reluctant to commit their enslaved labor when faced with the possibility of losing a slave to either death or permanent disability. Slaveholders who had the most to gain, however, and those who benefited the most from the canals themselves, were the most likely to risk such losses.³¹

A group of investors eager to clear parts of the Great Dismal Swamp in North Carolina, for instance, imported a cargo of slaves directly from the African coast to dig the canals that would drain it. In this isolated and remote area, suffocatingly ill suited for human habitation, local slave or free labor was unattainable. Reasoning that unseasoned slaves fresh from Africa would be the best investment, the investors of the Lake Company noted unapologetically, “they are indispensable in this unhealthy and laborious country; for these long canals, that are all important in rendering our swamplands valuable, must be dug by them, or not at all.”³² Many died from disease, injury, and the brutal treatment they endured from masters and overseers who worked them from dawn until dusk. Some even committed suicide to escape the physical and psychological trauma.³³

Stewart’s Canal was modest by the standards of the Great Dismal Swamp; six or seven miles long, it was built in fits and starts over a twenty-year period. Throughout the course of its construction, different investors participated; as the canal affected new areas of the Parson’s Creek district, nearby landowners invested in its development. While no account books or records remain for the company, these area landowners probably provided the slave labor required to build the canal. In addition, slaves were probably also hired from local slave owners who were willing to risk the loss or injury of their enslaved labor. A large free black population in Dorchester County offered an additional

labor source. Despite the debilitating and risky work, some free blacks may have found no alternative if they were unwilling or unable to leave the county for better work options elsewhere.

The work, in any case, was arduous and hazardous. Dorchester's vast marshes and swamps provided ample stagnant water for millions of mosquitoes and other irritating and dangerous insects. The digging was treacherous, exhausting, and back breaking. For those slaves unable to swim, a slip or a tumble could mean death, particularly during the winter months when the water was icy and weakened limbs could not react quickly enough to save a life. Often living in tents and moving along the path of the canal under construction, poorly fed and clothed, pneumonia and other infections took their toll. Heat during the summer added to their physical and emotional misery.

Nevertheless, many free black workers remained in this area once the canal was built. Finding work in the forests or in newly developed farmland, they labored next to their enslaved family and friends, establishing foundations of several predominantly black communities near the canal. Several of Stewart's former slaves settled in this area, establishing the nucleus of a closely knit community of skilled and unskilled black labor, particularly in the Peter's Neck area, south of Tobacco Stick on White Marsh Road, and south of Church Creek and Woolford on Harrisville Road. Several of the Stewart slaves married free blacks living and working in this area, later becoming central figures in the establishment of Malone's Church and the area's black school.³⁴ The Bowley brothers, for instance, manumitted by Levin Stewart, were apprenticed as blacksmiths and ship carpenters while still young and under the control of Joseph Stewart.³⁵ (John Bowley eventually married Harriet's niece, Kessiah Jolley.) While these young men lived at

worked at the epicenter of a thriving maritime community, many of their familial and community relationships also included the plantations and work camps in the forests deeper in the interior of the county. These slaves, and other black workers like them represented a spoke in the wheel of inter- and intra-regional communication.

From approximately 1836 on, Harriet worked and lived in and near this community. Though she lived for a time at the Stewart plantation in Tobacco Stick, she may have also lived with or near her father, and possibly her mother, at Peter's Neck, bringing her closer to relatives and friends she had been separated from as a child.³⁶ It was in this blended community of free and enslaved people that "Araminta" Harriet Ross married John Tubman, a local free black, probably sometime around 1844. It was a bittersweet moment for a free man such as John Tubman to marry Harriet. He must have loved her deeply, for he forfeited many rights incumbent upon the marriage of a free couple. By the laws of Maryland and other slaveholding states, all children born to John and Harriet would bear Harriet's slave status. Ownership of their children would fall to Edward Brodess as Harriet's master. John Tubman lacked all control or any legal or parental rights to his own children. Nor could he share a life with Harriet without the consent of Brodess. Their decision to marry was no doubt made only after careful deliberation. Perhaps they both hoped, against great odds, that they could in time purchase Harriet's freedom from Brodess.

John Tubman has been treated quite unsympathetically in the various narratives of Harriet's life. Very little is actually known of John Tubman's family and his life in Dorchester County. After Harriet ran away sometime in late 1849, John turned to another woman. By 1851 he had remarried, and this infidelity has become the defining moment

for a seemingly flawed and weak man. Sarah Bradford claimed that John called Harriet “a fool, and said she was like old Cudjo, who when a joke went round, never laughed till half an hour after everybody else got through,” stamping him indelibly as a loveless and emotionally unavailable husband.³⁸ In contrast, John’s decision to marry Harriet came with a great cost, creating an incredibly difficult choice. That choice suggests it was made by a man deeply in love with or at least powerfully drawn to Harriet.³⁹

John Tubman lived and worked in the Peter’s Neck area, near Harriet’s father, Ben Ross. Slightly older than Harriet at about thirty-two years old, John was a dark-skinned mulatto, born to free parents, possibly Thomas and Priscilla Tubman.⁴⁰ As a free man, John, of course, had far greater mobility than Harriet, and he may have moved about the area quite frequently, working for various farmers or other employers, as labor needs changed throughout the seasons.⁴¹ John labored in the forests, cutting and hauling timber during the slow farming seasons, and he may have worked in the fields at peak planting and harvesting periods. The Eastern Shore suffered greatly during the 1830s as the nation went through a banking crisis followed by a severe economic downturn. The agricultural community in Maryland suffered greatly as rapidly expanding farms to the west and southwest began to compete heavily with Eastern Shore agricultural products.⁴² Free blacks and whites began to migrate more readily to Baltimore in search of maritime, industrial and manufacturing jobs in the shipbuilding, milling, or iron foundries along Baltimore’s waterfront. As the economy slowly recovered, the demand for labor on the Eastern Shore increased, providing a variety of work options for free blacks like John Tubman and some slaves like Harriet. In fact, the labor of free blacks and hired slaves was a vital part of the Eastern Shore’s economy. The availability of this flexible work

force enabled many Eastern Shore farmers, manufacturers, timber harvesters, and other entrepreneurs the opportunity to hire labor when needed, without the heavy investment in slaves. For slave owners such as Brodess, the ability to hire out his excess slave labor offered him an alternative to selling his slaves, thereby maintaining adequate income from his human capital.⁴³

Harriet hired out her time quite regularly during the 1840s, paying Brodess a yearly fee for the privilege of hiring herself out to temporary masters of her own choosing – similar to that of a free laborer such as John Tubman. Given that Harriet was frequently disabled by her head injury, Brodess may have readily agreed to the arrangement. Her inability to labor consistently for Brodess or for local farmers to whom he could have hired her created a situation wherein he could not depend on her accruing earning for him. For Edward Brodess this arrangement may have been quite appealing, especially since Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, a major figure in the lives of Ben Ross and his family since the death of Anthony Thompson, Sr., “stood for her,” that is, he guaranteed the \$50-\$60 yearly payment extracted by Brodess for her labor.⁴⁴ Harriet, in turn, repaid Thompson and kept any additional monies she earned for herself. Through this arrangement, Harriet was able to earn enough excess funds “ ‘to buy a pair of steers,’ worth forty dollars.”⁴⁵ Independent and savvy, Tubman then hired herself, with her team of oxen, plowing in the fields and hauling timber in the woods, Harriet maximized her earning potential throughout the year. It seems likely that John and Harriet hoped that they would be able to earn enough money to buy Harriet’s freedom from Edward Brodess, if he was so inclined to sell her. Once married, John and Harriet presumably

lived together, or at least near one another in the Harrisville/White Marsh/Peter's Neck area, where Harriet's father and mother lived.⁴⁶

Harriet was thus spared the fate of two of her sisters, Linah and Soph. Brodess seemingly continued to struggle at farming; his property at Bucktown was not highly productive. His large family required ever increasing income, but his farm was too small to consistently increase its yield to produce higher yearly returns. Though the particulars of his financial situation are not known, it is likely that Brodess remained a simple farmer, lacking the resources or, perhaps, the drive, to expand his farm or entertain other economic opportunities. Instead, he turned his slaves into cash; having sold at least two slaves in 1825, Brodess sold Linah and Soph (and possibly more slaves) sometime during the 1830s and early 1840s.⁴⁷ Both women were supposed to be freed at age 45, but Brodess may well have sold them illegally to slave traders. Linah may have been sold with one child, though the record is not consistently clear.⁴⁸ she was probably also the mother of Kessiah but Soph, presumably, was sold away from her two children, Kessiah and Harriet. Tubman's brother recalled years later, while he stood imprisoned for debts owned by Brodess, that his sister, most likely Soph, was "taken away from her children, handcuffed, and put into the jail where I was. Her irons were taken off; she was in great grief, crying all the time. 'Oh my children! My poor children!' til it appeared to me, she would kill herself for grief."⁴⁹ Apparently, Brodess turned the four hundred dollars he received from illegally selling Linah as a "slave for life" into a land purchase, the record of which has yet to be found.⁵⁰ Ben and Rit would never forgive Brodess, and the rest of their lives in Maryland were fraught with fears of impending sales of the rest of their children "south."

On the cusp of adulthood, the petite and disabled Tubman went to work on a timber gang, exhibiting great skills laboring in the logging camps and in the fields. There she was exposed to the secret communication networks that were the provenance of Black waterman and other free and enslaved blacks. Like her father, Harriet drove oxen, cut and hauled wood, plowed, and did “all the work of a man.” Living “much with her father and mother,” Tubman’s life revolved around the farms and small cabins in the black community while she labored for larger landholders and farmers, men such as Joseph Stewart, John D. Parker, and others.⁵¹ As one of the few, if not the only woman working in the forests on a timber gang, Tubman became part of an exclusively male world. Here, in the forests, beyond the watchful eye of white masters, Tubman’s father and others passed along the news of the larger world that they has been able to acquire as black men. For the male slaves who worked in this environment had access to the Black waterman who worked along the Big Blackwater River, Parson’s Creek, Tobacco Stick, Woolford and Church Creek. They communicated with the black mariners whose ships carried the timber to the Baltimore shipyards. The free black men who toiled next to their enslaved friends were able to move about freely, from one community to another, from one family member to another. These black men were part of a larger world, a world beyond the plantation, beyond the woods, that reached out to towns and cities up and down the Chesapeake, and ranging as far away as Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. They knew the safe places, they knew the sympathetic whites, and more importantly, they knew the danger. They created a veiled and secret world parallel to the white master’s world.

Tubman's unique ability to make effective use of this complicated communications network, combined with well practiced skills of disguise and deception, set her apart from other slave women and men in her community. In the predominantly illiterate community in which she lived, oral and physical communication was key. Furthermore, in a world of suspicious whites, a letter could elicit unwanted attention. Like the heavily coded spirituals Tubman would later use to guide fugitive slaves North, a look, a glance, a movement, a shift of the foot or a wave of a hand could be invisible to the white master, yet speak louder than words to fellow blacks, passing messages in times of need, in times of life and death. Literacy was not necessary for slaves and free blacks to communicate here.

Ben Ross, an experienced and trusted slave, probably knew many of the local watermen and seamen who worked the boats in the region. From the Little Choptank River, to Baltimore, Washington, Norfolk, and on to New York, Massachusetts and Maine, these black watermen provided what historian Jeffrey Bolster describes as a substitute for the newspapers of the white community: "a mode of communication integrating local communities into the larger community of color," creating a notion of black identity that "inhabited a common ground closed to whites."⁵²

Anthony Thompson may have even allowed Harriet's father to accompany timber to Baltimore, ensuring safe passage to markets on Baltimore's bustling wharves. In any case, Ben Ross was in a perfect position, even as a slave, to participate in the regional system that was the provenance of black watermen. Once free, Ross would have been more likely to move about since he no longer required the permission of his master, Anthony Thompson.⁵³ While working for John Stewart in Tobacco Stick, Tubman

visited the wharves often – either procuring shipments for the store or readying goods to be transported by boat to distant markets. Loading ships with “huge barrels of produce,” and hauling “stone boats” loaded with goods for Stewart inevitably led to work on the wharves.⁵⁴

W. Jeffrey Bolster, Julius Sherrard Scott, and David Cecelski have demonstrated that black mariners, were the hubs of great communication wheel, spreading news, gossip and personal messages to blacks living throughout the Atlantic Diaspora. Scott argues that the freedom of movement afforded seamen in general proved to be a vital link between otherwise isolated communities of free and enslaved black people throughout the Atlantic. Spreading notions of liberty and freedom, relaying the details of revolution in Haiti, sharing news of abolition and colonization efforts and other political issues, and passing messages between members of families separated from one another, black watermen and seamen were vital to the survival of many free and enslaved black communities. As Cecelski suggests in his study of North Carolinian black watermen who plied the waters of the Chesapeake, local messages may have been the main sources of information about freedom and liberty in the North and in learning the best routes to there.

Indeed, a slave’s social and economic network was often derived from the social and economic relationships fostered by his or her slave owner and the work assignments distributed to their bondswomen and men. Of course, market days, camp meetings, horse races, and other forms of economic and social gatherings also gave slaves and free blacks important opportunities to meet and spend time with one another.⁵⁵ For Harriet Tubman

and her family, the social and economic connections that linked the Pattisons, Stewarts, Thompsons, Brodesses and others, were at the heart of her extended family experience.

No doubt, families separated by the nature of their work found a means to communicate and visit. While the Thompsons, and other slaveholders like them, may have been aware of the familial and social relationships among their slaves, and even accommodated them on occasion, they remained woefully ignorant of the black inter and intra-regional networks which often paralleled the white networks of trade, travel and communication. Thomas Dail of Dorchester County, for instance, allowed his trusted slave William Cornish to travel to Baltimore and attend distant camp meetings. Sometimes gone for two weeks, Cornish always returned, reinforcing Dail's confidence that Cornish was a devoted and trustworthy slave, even though Cornish, in fact, was secretly determined to escape his bondage.⁵⁶ Anthony Thompson may have felt the same sort of trust in his relationship with Ben Ross, Jerry Manoke and others. Many free blacks, of course, traveled about the county and region quite readily for economic, social, political or spiritual reasons. Free black mobility expanded the world even for slaves who were compelled to remain under the vigilant control of white masters.

The rapid exchange of information across geographic, social and cultural boundaries was central to the survival of the African-American community and crucial in providing Tubman and her family and friends with an effective and secure means of operating beyond the gaze of white masters.⁵⁷ But despite its power, the network could be easily disrupted by the vagaries of planters' lives. In November 1836, Anthony Thompson died at the age of seventy-four. For Ben Ross and the other enslaved people owned by Thompson, this marked the beginning of a period of uncertainty, instability, and fear.

The death of a slaveholder usually initiated an extremely fearful mood among the enslaved people of the deceased's estate; the division of the estate among heirs and the payment of outstanding debts often meant the sale of slaves to satisfy creditors, the breaking up of families and the fracturing of community relationships. Thompson never sold any of his slaves, and although they were hired out or were required to work away from family and friends on the plantation, these slaves did experience a modicum of stability, allowing the creation and maintenance of long-term and intimate community and family relationships. Several of his slaves had been manumitted prior to his death, and in his will Thompson provided for the eventual manumission of all of his slaves at staggered manumission dates, ranging from immediate freedom to liberty for some of the children when they reached the ages of 24, 30, or 45 years old.⁵⁸ It is possible that these unequal manumission schedules were purposely established to provide incentives to his enslaved people to work hard and remain compliant, thereby continuing to serve the planter's remaining family while earning further reductions in the slaves' terms of service.⁵⁹ In fact, Thompson's son, Dr. Anthony C. Thompson instituted just such a practice over the next twenty or so years, reducing the terms of service as incentives or rewards for good service and extending terms of service for defiant and uncooperative slaves.⁶⁰

Thompson's two surviving sons, Anthony C. Thompson and Absalom Thompson were the major beneficiaries of Thompson's estate.⁶¹ Although Thompson had never, apparently, sold any of his enslaved people, the advent of his death still brought anxiety and tension to those bonded to his estate. Though enslaved, the Thompson bondsmen and women had led fairly stable lives in the tri-county area. Most of them were married

to local free or enslaved people, and were able to raise their children to adulthood.

Though they did not all live in two parent households, an ideal practiced by most white families, they had come to be assured that they would not be separated forever by sale or removal to a distant territory.⁶² Most, in fact, had been given some sort of future hope of freedom in the form of limited terms of service through delayed manumissions set up by Thompson before his death. But they also all would have clearly understood that a master's promises were not always carried through, and the uncertainty inherent in estate settlements always created havoc and tremendous anxiety for the affected slave community.

At his death, Thompson had approximately forty-three slaves, including ten men, eight women, and twenty-five children. Thompson provided for the manumission of his slaves by the time they neared the maximum age for manumission, that is forty-five years of age, though some were set to be free at even earlier ages. Of course, birth dates were seldom recorded for slaves, and the slaves themselves were usually deprived of such information. It was common practice to extend slaves' terms of service illicitly. Manumitting a slave over forty-five years old was illegal in Maryland. To extend the bonded service of a healthy and productive slave, slave owners often and shamelessly changed the ages of their slaves. Though Ben Ross had been born sometime during the 1780s, Anthony Thompson provided for Ben's manumission in 1841.⁶³ This would have made Ben older than the legal age limit for Maryland manumissions; Ben was in his fifties in 1840, making it an illegal manumission. Though freedom at any age may seem preferable to perpetual bondage, in fact, the freeing of aged slaves was much frowned upon and discouraged. The state and its communities did not want indigent, vagrant, old

and worn out slaves loitering in their communities. Some Eastern Shore whites, both slave and non-slave holding, professed a moral and religious responsibility to provide for aged slaves, some held the slaveocracy accountable and responsible for maintaining elderly, disabled and dependent slaves. But many slave owners did not want the responsibility of caring for older less productive slaves who could no longer care for themselves. Some slaveholders resolved the issue by denying the aging of their slaves, pushed back their ages by as much as 10 years or more, and then manumitting them at the maximum legal age of forty-five, knowing full well the slaves were many years older than that. Aged and exhausted slaves then found themselves unable to lead productive lives once free from bondage. Still, the planters' were rarely prosecuted for this crime, the practice continued right up to the Civil War.

Anthony Thompson Sr., on the other hand, bequeathed nearly all of his enslaved people to his youngest son, Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, leaving explicit instructions as to the specific terms of service left for each enslaved person. Bound to serve another five years, Ben Ross was also provided with ten acres of land "for and during his lifetime... laid out to his house binding with the road" on the west side of Harrisville Road, with the "privilege of cutting timber" for his support.⁶⁵ This arrangement was unusual; while manumissions by will was hardly uncommon, Thompson's provision for the material support of Ross through life tenancy and rights to timber on the property was extremely unusual. On some cases, a slave master awarded a prized female slave, who may have been his mistress, freedom, property, and money, but even this situation was extremely rare.⁶⁶

Thompson must have been an unusual man, for Ben Ross was not the only beneficiary of such a bequest. In fact, Thompson provided that Jerry Manoke and his wife Polly were to be set free immediately upon Thompson's death, and their children John, Aaron, Moses, Eliza and Matilda were to serve anywhere from eighteen to thirty-three more years. Their youngest children, Mary and Susan were to serve forty-one and thirty-eight more years, but were allowed to remain with Jerry and Polly until they were fifteen and eleven years old, respectively.⁶⁷ Such terms of servitude hardly seem generous to the modern eye, imposing, as they did, years of slavery. But in the context of antebellum plantation life, they were most uncommon. So, too, was Thompson's provision providing Jerry and Polly with the use of ten acres of land "to be laid out to him round his house where the said Jerry now lives, together with the privilege of cutting timber on any part of my land... to remain peaceable and quietly during his life." Thompson bequeathed to Jerry one year's worth of bread and called upon his son Anthony to continue to provide for Jerry "in time of need."⁶⁸

Probably as a reward for hard and faithful service, or in return for promises made years before, Thompson's favoritism suggests an intimate connection (at least on the part of Thompson) with Ross and Manokey. Thompson had probably enslaved Ben and Jerry since they had been children. They played a major role in the physical and economic development of Thompson's properties; stripping his land of prized timber, hauling it to the Big Blackwater River for shipment to markets, preparing and planting hundreds of acres of agricultural property, and digging the vital canal that would transform economic investment in the Blackwater region. Thompson was no fool; he knew the labor of Ross, Manokey and his other slaves was required and that they had no choice but to carry out

such tasks. Still his bequest suggests that Ben Ross and Jerry Manoke were particularly valued and prized slaves, and that he felt some sort of responsibility to provide for them and their families. No other Thompson slaves, male or female, were awarded material support and freedom through Thompson's last will and testament.⁶⁹

After Thompson's death, Jerry and Polly Manokey remained within the Peter's Neck community, where they had been enslaved for decades. Surrounded by family and friends, the Manokeys carried on with their lives, working and raising their young daughters who remained at home with them. Jerry, like Ben, may have continued working for Dr. Thompson on Anthony Thompson's property, or he may have hired out to Joseph Stewart or John D. Parker, both of whom continued harvesting the timber and expanding their land under cultivation. In April 1840, Ben Ross received his freedom, one year sooner than the will specified.⁷⁰ Finally free, Ross chose to remain in the area, continuing to work in his capacity as a timber inspector for Joseph Stewart and his sons, and other area farmers and shipbuilders in need of his skills. With his wife and children still held in bondage, Ben remained tied to the long-standing familial and social network that Tubman had come to know so well.

Though Thompson seemingly had fostered intact families with his enslaved people, his economic interests set the parameters of family life in his slave quarters. Families were not kept together indefinitely. Thompson, like other slaveholders, hired his slaves out. His will specified that Dr. Anthony C. Thompson hire out his slaves "at the customary wagers [sp] of the county," giving one-third of the proceeds to Dr. Thompson's brother, Dr. Absalom Thompson. Though all of Thompson's slaves were given to Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, Eliza and Matilda, among others, were ultimately

“awarded” to Absalom Thompson, who then lived in nearby Talbot County. Eliza, who was about fifteen at the time of Thompson’s death in 1836, and Matilda, about twelve, could have already been working at Absalom’s plantation at Bayside in Talbot County at the time. Absalom and Anthony C. may have worked out an arrangement of sorts whereby Absalom took several of the slaves in exchange for the one-third interest in their earnings.

Ben’s world revolved around the enslaved families owned by Thompson, who lived in the slave quarters round and about Thompson’s plantation at Peter’s Neck, south of Tobacco Stick and Woolford. Nearby free black families, living along Harrisville, Indian Landing, and White Marsh roads represented another part of Ben’s complex community life.⁷¹ Spending time with Rit, who lived sometimes on the Brodess property at Bucktown several miles away, or who was hired out to other area farmers, was not altogether convenient, particularly considering the work assignments they both must have endured in service to their owners. Though some spouses and the families of Thompson’s slaves were held by other Dorchester and Talbot county slaveholders, they were close by enough to form strong and seemingly permanent family bonds. Though the living arrangements for many of Thompson’s slaves are unknown, it appears that a set of fictive or virtual familial relationships evolved in this slave community. In 1843, Ben Ross purchased the freedom of two of Thompson’s slaves: Maria Bailey and Aaron Manoke, “a cripple.” For the small sum of ten dollars, Dr. Anthony C. Thompson agreed to the transaction. Ben’s familial relationship to these two people is not known, although Aaron was probably related in some way to Jerry Manoke. Living in the same slave community for most of their lives, Ben may have even helped raise them.⁷² Maria was

married to Isaac Bailey, who bore the same name as Frederick Douglass's grandfather.⁷³ Aaron, whose disability is unknown, may have been an unproductive slave even though he was a young man in the prime of his most productive years. Maria, on the other hand, was considered "delicate," a term that could have meant weak and unproductive, or she could have been pregnant at the time she was sold.

According to Ross, Dr. Thompson was not interested in pursuing farming in the Blackwater region as his father had done. Seeking more lucrative investment opportunities, Dr. Thompson began in 1847 to acquire large tracts of heavily forested land, totaling over 2000 acres, in Caroline County, thirty miles northeast of Peter's Neck in an area called Poplar Neck. Formerly part of the Goldsborough plantation, Poplar Neck was situated on the Choptank River as it slowly winds its way from its headwaters near Greensborough, Caroline County to the Chesapeake Bay. Gambling his own modest fortune and his entire inheritance, Thompson hoped to become a major timber supplier in the region. He enlisted the help of his sons, Anthony, Edward, and possibly John Thompson, and eventually moved the majority of his enslaved men, and possibly later the women, to Caroline County. There they were set to work cutting and hauling great quantities of timber to be transported by black and white waterman to the shipbuilders in Dorchester and Caroline counties, and possibly beyond.⁷⁷ Leaving all of his ancestral lands in Dorchester County behind, Thompson hoped to make a name for himself and for his sons. Keeping a residence in the town of Cambridge, where his wife and many of his enslaved women probably lived, Thompson initially traveled back and forth to oversee his new operations.⁷⁸

For years, Dr. Thompson had been involved in a variety of business in addition to his medical practice. He eventually opened a drug store in Cambridge, selling his own medicinal elixirs and medications, including “Thompson’s Vegetable Worm Syrup” and “Thompson’s Vegetable Anti-bilious Pills.” Thompson also sold “sweets and confections” and other fine goods, purchased during frequent trips to Baltimore.⁷⁹ Throughout the 1840s and early 1850s, Thompson maintained his residence at “Bellefield,” his fourteen and half acre property near Boundary Road in Cambridge. During this period, Dr. Thompson took on more public and active rolls within the community. He was an early supporter of the American and Maryland Colonization movements, which sought to transport free blacks back to sponsored settlement sites in Liberia on the West Coast of Africa. He was also a member of the local Sons of Temperance and was appointed School Commissioner for Cambridge.⁸⁰ By 1848, Dr. Thompson had sold all of his inherited ancestral property at Peters Neck and was moving his experienced enslaved labor northeast along the Choptank River to Poplar Neck to work his new timbering operations in Caroline County.

Harriet, meanwhile, had been hiring herself out to various employers until 1847, when she was hired by Dr. Anthony Thompson and lived with him. With her husband John possibly living near Cambridge, Harriet may have remained at Thompson’s residence in Cambridge rather than moving to Caroline County where her father eventually moved.⁸¹ But Harriet became ill during the winter of 1848-49, working only when she could. Thompson may have been more tolerant of Tubman’s relapses; his need for Ben’s services at his Poplar Neck properties may have induced Thompson to be flexible with his daughter’s uncertain health. Brodess, however, was still struggling

financially and was eager to sell her. The fifty to sixty dollars she brought him on a yearly basis was not enough to meet his immediate cash needs. Thompson was in no position to purchase her, even as a favor to Ben; his own financial situation was precarious and he was already overburdened with debt after purchasing his Caroline County land.⁸² Tubman later recalled to Sarah Bradford that “from Christmas till March I worked as I could, and I *prayed* through all the long nights—I groaned and prayed for ole master: ‘Oh Lord, convert master! ‘ Oh Lord, change dat man's heart!’” Harriet’s prayers would be answered, but not in the way she could have ever imagined.⁸³

Harriet’s prayers took on a more urgent tone as the winter of 1849 wore on and the first signs of spring began to appear on the Eastern Shore. Still recovering from poor health and overwork, Tubman prayed relentlessly, pleading with God to forgive her sins and deliver her from this heartless master. “Appears like I prayed all the time,” she later told Sarah Bradford, “about my work, everywhere, I prayed and I groaned to the Lord. When I went to the horse-trough to wash my face, I took up the water in my hand and I said, ‘Oh Lord, wash me, make me clean!’ Then I take up something to wipe my face, and I say, ‘Oh Lord, wipe away all my sin!’ When I took the broom and began to sweep, I groaned, ‘Oh Lord, what so ever sin there be in my heart, sweep it out, Lord, clear and clean!’”⁸⁴ More fearful than ever, her prayers took on a more urgent tone with each passing day. By March of 1849, she imagined with a keen sense of foreboding that she was about to be sold. “I prayed all night long for master, till the first of March; and all the time he was bringing people to look at me, and trying to sell me. Then we heard that some of us was going to be sold to go with the chain-gang down to the cotton and rice fields, and they said I was going, and my brothers, and sisters. Then I changed my

prayer. First of March I began to pray, ‘Oh Lord, if you ain’t never going to change that man’s heart, kill him, Lord, and take him out of the way.’”⁸⁵

Little did Harriet know when she prayed for Brodess’s death that he lay dying in Bucktown. On March 7, 1849, Edward Brodess died at the age of 47. Harriet was stunned. Despite her relief, she still felt a sense of responsibility that her prayers had indeed been answered, though not entirely as she had expected. “Next thing I heard old master was dead, and he died just as he lived. Oh, then, it appeared like I’d give all the world full of gold, if I had it, to bring that poor soul back. But I couldn’t pray for him no longer.”⁸⁶ While his death would spark a decade or more of anxiety and upheaval in the lives of Brodess’s wife and dependent children, none were affected more than the slaves who were part of his estate. While Harriet had prayed for his death as a means to putting an end to his threats to sell her and her brothers, it actually resulted in just what she had feared. Within six months of Edward’s death, his widow Eliza began petitioning Dorchester County’s Orphans Court to order the sale of several of the estate’s slaves to accommodate the Brodesses’ many debts.⁸⁷

A day or two before he died, Edward Brodess instructed his lawyer Thomas J.H. Eccleston to write out his will, leaving his estate, both personal and real to his wife, Eliza. But he excluded his slaves, giving his wife Eliza only “the use and hire” of his slaves while she lived “for the purpose of raising his children, and after her death, all his estate was to go to his children.”⁸⁸ Several of Harriet’s family members believed that their master’s will provided for their freedom upon his death.⁸⁹ Harriet’s brother, William Henry, later said, “he promised us, that if we would only be faithful, he would leave us

all to be free, ... but he left us all slaves.”⁹⁰ Harriet herself knew better. Brodess had long proved himself to be dishonest and untrustworthy, and she did not trust his promises.

However, sometime during the late 1840s, Tubman hired a lawyer to check the probate records of her mother Rit’s first owner, Atthow Pattison.⁹¹ Paying for the lawyer with money she had earned by hiring herself out, she soon learned that her mother had been manumitted by Pattison’s will, written in 1791 and probated after his death in 1797. Tubman was enraged to learn that Pattison had instructed that his female slaves and their children serve his heirs only until the slaves reached the age of forty-five.⁹² Rit, who had been bequeathed to Atthow’s granddaughter, Mary Pattison, was entitled to her freedom sometime in the early 1830s.⁹³ She was now over sixty years old. Edward Brodess, Atthow Pattison’s great-grandson, did not abide by the terms of the will. It is not clear whether Brodess had been aware of the terms of his great-grandfather’s will, but it is certain that he violated them during the prior twenty-five years he had sold several of Rit’s children to out-of-state buyers, transactions that were illegal for term slaves. Only one of those sales was recorded, however, leaving open the possibility that the other sales were not recorded because he was aware that they were illegal transactions.⁹⁴

Whether Tubman initially learned of the provisions of Pattison’s will through her mother or another member of the black community, or through the Pattison heirs, is not clear. But, by July 1849, four months after Edward Brodess died, Gourney Crow Pattison, Atthow Pattison’s grandson and Edward Brodess’s uncle, filed suit against Eliza Brodess and John Mills, administrators of Edward’s estate, claiming ownership rights to Rit and any of her children then over the age of forty-five. According to the complaint filed in the Dorchester County Orphans Court, Gourney Crow Pattison argued that the

terms of Atthow Pattison's will implied that Edward Brodess was only entitled to the labor of Rit and her children until they reached the age of forty-five. Because Atthow neglected to specify what was to happen to the slaves upon reaching this age (though his intention must have been freedom, like many such manumissions by will at that time), Pattison argued that Rit and her offspring should revert to the Pattison estate.⁹⁵ Atthow Pattison had instructed that his daughter Elizabeth Pattison receive the residue of his estate, after all debts and bequests had been paid and assigned, and that when her children arrived at the age of twenty-one, they were to share equally in the residue of the estate, as well.⁹⁶

Based on this narrow reading of the will and the interpretation of probate law, Gourney Crow Pattison, his siblings and their children claimed ownership of Rit through their rights to the residue of Atthow's estate. Rit, he argued, belonged to him because she was well over the age of forty-five, and all wages Brodess had collected from hiring out Rit after she turned forty-five must be turned over to Atthow Pattison's estate. The lawsuit also claimed that, because Brodess had sold two of Rit's children, Linah and Soph, illegally as slaves for life beyond the State of Maryland, the Pattison heirs were entitled to compensation for the loss of their labor. They also sought to prevent the sale of any of Rit's other children until the matter could be resolved.

The timing of the lawsuit is important, because it appears that Tubman's inquiry into the status of her mother's enslavement may have either precipitated or initiated this legal action. Gourney Pattison pressed his claim in court; depositions were ordered and documentary evidence produced over a period of several weeks, culminating in the

dismissal of the suit on August 6, 1849. Pattison and his attorney, James A. Stewart, appealed, sending the case back to court.⁹⁷

In the meantime, Eliza Brodess was fretting about managing her large household and growing debts. With several minor children still living at home, Brodess faced pressing financial obligations that left little security for a new widow.⁹⁸ Within a month of Edward's death, the court ordered the sale of all of his personal property, "negroes excepted."⁹⁹ In most such cases, the family of the deceased bought all of the estate's personal property, if they had enough money to pay all of the debts owed by the deceased person. Eliza, it appears, did not. She turned to her neighbor, John Mills, who had been appointed as co-administrator of Edward Brodess's estate with her, for a loan. Indebted to him for one thousand dollars, and probably pressed by him for repayment, Eliza turned to one of the most liquid assets she had available, and the assets she was most willing to part with: her slaves.¹⁰⁰

On June 27, Mills and Brodess posted an advertisement in the local newspaper to sell twenty-year-old "Harriet" and her two-year-old child, Mary Jane.¹⁰¹ Harriet, probably the daughter of Tubman's sister Linah and presumably named after her grandmother, Rit, was the first of Brodess's slaves to be offered for sale. The auction, set for July 16 at the Dorchester County Court House, never took place, however, and the reasons are unknown.¹⁰² Possibly Harriet's husband (unknown) was trying to negotiate her purchase, or the Pattison lawsuit blocked the sale temporarily. On August 29, however, an advertisement appeared in the *Cambridge Democrat* featuring the upcoming "public sale to the highest bidder, at the Court house door... a Negro woman named Kizziah," Harriet's twenty-five-year old sister.¹⁰³ Brodess advertised Kessiah as a slave for life, a

clear violation of the Pattison will.¹⁰⁴ Scheduled for Monday, September 10, that sale did not proceed as planned either. The Pattisons continued to appeal the dismissal of their lawsuit against Brodess, possibly hampering Brodess's efforts to sell her slaves. Brodess and Mills postponed Kessiah's sale, but returned to court on September 17th, petitioning the court to allow them to sell "Keziah [Kessiah] and her children until they arrive at the age of 45 years."¹⁰⁵ Kessiah's father, Harkless Jolley, was also an enslaved man, and was owned by Ann Staplefort Martin Grieves.¹⁰⁶ Kessiah was married to John Bowley, who had been manumitted by Levin Stewart's heirs several years earlier. The two young children cited in the court order were James Alfred, aged six, and Araminta, an infant. As descendants of Rit, Kessiah and her children should have been accorded the limited term status as specified and mandated in Atthow Pattisons will.

The uncertainty of the future must have been unbearable, wreaking havoc on the personal relationships between the slaves, as each wondered who would be the next one sold away from family and friends. Terror gripped the family. The court first ordered Kessiah sold "at public sale to the highest best bidder."¹⁰⁷ Six weeks later, however, the court rescinded the order to sell her.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps, John Bowley was attempting to negotiate a private sale with Eliza Brodess; as a free man working in a shipyard in Cambridge, he may have been hopeful that he could buy his wife and young children. John and his brothers were entrepreneurial shipbuilders and blacksmiths in Cambridge, co-owners of a schooner that they built at the Steam Mill Wharf in Cambridge with John T. Stewart, James A. Stewart's brother.¹⁰⁹ Between his own labors and that of his brothers, John may well have been able to raise the funds to purchase his wife and children.

This reprieve for Kessiah, however, came at a high price. In reversing itself, the court granted a new order, dated October 24th, authorizing the sale of Kessiah's sister, "Harriet and her child Mary Ann."¹¹⁰ Whether an auction actually took place is not clear; on June 17, 1850, Eliza Brodess and John Mills sold Harriet and her child "Mary Jane" to a local merchant, Thomas Willis, for three hundred and seventy five dollars.¹¹¹ Five months later, Eliza Brodess sold another slave, Dawes Keene, to William Cooper and Samuel Dunnock for \$300.¹¹² The long delay in selling Harriet and her child Mary Ann may have been a direct result of Pattison's continuing court actions against Brodess's estate.

These sales in 1849 marked a turning point for the transformation of Tubman from a slave to a liberator. The first step was her own hazardous journey of self-liberation. Spurred by rumors of her impending sale to satisfy creditors of Brodess's estate, and against the wishes of her free husband John, Tubman first took the initiative and set out.¹¹³ On September 17, 1849, the very same day the Eliza Brodess petitioned the court to allow her to sell Kessiah, Tubman and her two brothers, Ben and Henry, ran away.¹¹⁴ An advertisement for a reward for their capture did not appear in the local paper for over two weeks, suggesting that Eliza Brodess had hired them out to other masters and therefore did not have constant supervision of them, or she had become accustomed to short term desertion by them as a matter of daily life on her plantation. While Tubman was working for Thompson during this time period, it is possible that her brothers, Ben and Henry, were also hired out to Thompson, making their escape together more likely.¹¹⁵

Brodess offered three hundred dollars for the return of all three slaves, if taken outside of Maryland, one hundred and fifty dollars if taken inside the state.

Ranaway from the subscriber on Monday the 17th ult., three Negroes, named as follows: HARRY [Henry], aged about 19 years, has on one side of his neck a wen, just under the ear, he is of a dark chestnut color, about 5 feet 8 or nine inches high [sic]; BEN, aged aged [sic] about 25 years, is very quick to speak when spoken to, he is of a chestnut color, about six feet high; MINTY, aged about 27 years, is of a chestnut color, fine looking, and bout 5 feet high. One hundred dollars reward will be given for each of the above named Negroes, if taken out of the State, and \$50 each if taken in the State. They must be lodged in Baltimore, Easton, or Cambridge Jail, in Maryland.

Eliza Ann Brodess

Near Bucktown, Dorchester county, Md.

Oct. 3d, 1849.

The Delaware Gazette will please copy the above three weeks, and charge this office.¹¹⁶

Tubman's brothers, however, "disagreed with her about directions," and succumbed to the fear of being captured.¹¹⁷ They were "appalled by the dangers before and behind them, determined to go back, and in spite of her remonstrance's dragged her with them."¹¹⁸ Runaway slaves, if caught, faced almost certain sale into the Deep South, severe whipping, or worse. Ben and Henry were young fathers, and perhaps the prospect of leaving wives and children behind was ultimately too great a sacrifice for them to make at that moment.¹¹⁹ They probably hoped for a local sale rather than the more frightening possibility of sale to a slave trader from Mississippi or Georgia. Slave traders, boarding at the hotel across the street from the Dorchester's county court house, were a constant reminder of this threat. Perched on the hotel's veranda, traders would haggle with private sellers or bid on slaves placed at auction on the courthouse steps. Vulnerable slaves often attempted to negotiate a favorable sale to a local planter, and for some Eastern Shore whites this was the most preferable course of action as well. No doubt, Ben, Robert, and Henry had such hopes.

Sometime after October 3, when she had her brothers had returned after their failed attempt to flee, Harriet Tubman stole away, again, this time alone, from her cabin on Dr.

Anthony C. Thompson's property, though which specific property remains unclear.

Using "her strength and her craft, which was great," Tubman traveled by night, using the North Star and instructions from white and black helpers to find her way to freedom in Philadelphia.¹²⁰ "Harriet knew the North Star," Helen Tatlock later told Conrad, "that was one thing she insisted that she was always sure of."¹²¹

According to Franklin Sanborn, Harriet "found a friend in a white lady, who knew her story and helped her on her way." Helen Tatlock, a friend of Tubman's later in her life, remembered Tubman telling her that she confided her plans to a white woman who lived in the area. Tatlock thought the woman was a Quaker, because "it was Quakers who then gave escaping" slaves the most aid.¹²² Tubman gave this unidentified woman a coveted bed quilt; she could not give it to another slave, as they would soon come under suspicion for knowing of Tubman's plans to run away. This white woman then gave Tubman two names, and directed her to the first person on the way who would then help her on to the second.¹²³

The exact route and the identities of those who helped her remains a matter of great speculation. Poplar Neck, Dr. Thompson's vast plantation in Caroline County, was ideally located on the Choptank River between Skeleton Creek to the north and the village of Choptank to the south, and was where Tubman's father Ben Ross had probably living while managing some of Dr. Thompson's timbering operations in Caroline County. The Neck property included a brick "big house," grain fields, a fruit orchard and slave quarters.¹²⁴ The 1850 census for Caroline county lists Ben and Rit Ross as free blacks living on Thompson's property, close to Thompson's son, Edward who was probably

living in the brick house while he oversaw his father's timbering and farming operations.¹²⁵

Poplar Neck, however, was also ideally located on an invisible path to freedom in the North. A small Quaker settlement, the Marshy Creek Friends of the Northwest Fork Meeting, had been rooted there for over 150 years, and several of the area's most active Quaker abolitionists lived within a mile of Thompson's new home. A small black settlement had also been established there, and in 1849 the local Quaker community deeded a parcel of its Mt. Pleasant Church property to the Black community for a church and cemetery of its own.¹²⁶

Quakers were among the most important members of an increasingly organized network to freedom for runaway slaves. Though some Quakers denounced the owning of slaves from the earliest colonial times, many Quakers continued to own, buy and sell slaves until the mid 1700s, when Quaker John Woolman of New Jersey made a tour of Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina for a first hand view of American slavery. Based on his observations, Woolman's influential tracts denounced slavery as incompatible with Christianity. His continued attacks on slaveholding within the Society forced many Quakers to re-examine their positions. By 1770, many Quaker meetings were disowning members for purchasing slaves, and manumissions by deed and will were becoming commonplace. By 1790, Eastern Shore Quaker meetings were free of all slave owners.¹²⁷ This Quaker experience was repeated in other states as well, providing troops for a groundswell of activism to end slavery throughout the young nation, in addition to establishing a loose network of like-minded individuals who could be tapped to help freedom seekers find their way north and provide support and shelter once they arrived.

Not all Quakers, to be sure, were willing participants in this network; while they may not have been allowed to own slaves, many were neither interested in slaves nor inclined to help them run away.

Residents of sparsely populated Caroline county perhaps more readily tolerated the anti-slavery views of its Quaker inhabitants because there were few slaves in the county, and the Quakers' abolitionist views seemed to have little impact in the community.¹²⁸ Poplar Neck then seems to be the most likely way station for Tubman's escape north, if not the starting point.

But, Tubman may have left from another property, Dr. Anthony Thompson's residence in Cambridge called "Bellefield." Consisting of fourteen and one half acres, a main house, several outbuildings and two slave cabins, Bellefield had been Thompson's main residence for several years while he practiced medicine and ran an apothecary and fine goods store in Cambridge. Thompson, his wife Susan, and daughters Mary and Sarah, were all living at this residence in 1850 when the census taker arrived.¹²⁹ Could Tubman have run away from Bellefield instead of the plantation at Poplar Neck?

There were also non-Quakers living on the Eastern Shore who had abolitionist and anti-slavery feelings, though very few were vocal. While the presence of Quakers was more prevalent in Caroline County, this does not preclude the likelihood of sympathetic or even abolitionist white woman living near Thompson in Cambridge.¹³⁰ Thus, regardless of where Tubman initially ran from, she could have quickly tapped into an existing local network of abolitionists and others, including free blacks and other slaves, who were willing to help slaves make their way to freedom. The Underground Railroad,

as this secret network of places and people was known as, was alive and functioning on the Eastern Shore by the time Tubman took her liberty.

Tubman could tell no one of her plans to run, particularly her mother. Rit was already emotionally spent from the loss of her other daughters; “her cries and groans would have disclosed the secret.”¹³¹ But Tubman could not leave without giving her mother some sort of message about her plans. On the evening of her escape, Tubman offered to do her mother’s chores, sending her onto her cabin to retire for the evening. Rushing up to the “big house,” where several of her relatives lived and worked, Tubman sought out “Mary,” another slave in whom she felt she could confide.¹³² There, in the kitchen, she hoped to tell Mary of her plans to run away, but the room was crowded. She began to “frolic” with Mary, and they both ran outside to continue playing when Dr. Thompson rode up on horseback and surprised them. Mary “darted back” to the kitchen, but Harriet hesitated. Thompson “was regarded with special awe by his slaves,” and few dared sing or talk when he was around. But Harriet was desperate to leave a message, so she stepped forward, meeting him at the gate, singing:

I'm sorry I'm going to leave you,
Farewell, oh farewell;
But I'll meet you in the morning,
Farewell, oh farewell.

I'll meet you in the morning,
I'm bound for the promised land,
On the other side of Jordan,
Bound for the promised land.¹³³

Thompson passed her as he rode through the gate, but she continued to sing. He looked around at Harriet, and watched her casually close the gate and slowly walk away, continuing her message in song. A few moments passed, and Tubman tried again to

return to the house and tell Mary of her plans. But Thompson was still there, watching for her, so she sang louder, bowing to Thompson as she walked by.¹³⁴ He was probably a little suspicious of her behavior or motives since she had already run away once with her brothers. Nevertheless, he did not question her, and he rode on to the house.¹³⁵

Once he was out of sight, Tubman, apparently fled, probably working her way north as far as safely possible during the night. By the time Tubman reached the first “safe house,” as homes of sympathetic helpers along the way to freedom in the North were called, the woman of the house asked her to sweep the yard - a deceptive tactic helped “camouflage” Tubman while she waited for the woman’s husband to return from the fields. When darkness fell, the man loaded his wagon, covering Tubman so she could not be seen, and took her to the next sympathetic home.¹³⁶

The Leverton family, Quakers of Caroline County, was known to be active abolitionists and Underground Railroad operatives.¹³⁷ Though Jacob Leverton had died by the time Tubman took her freedom in 1849, his widow Hannah still lived in the area with her son, Arthur W. Leverton, who was run out of Caroline County in the late 1850s for aiding slaves in their attempts to escape from their masters.¹³⁸ Dr. Thompson’s son, Anthony C. Thompson Jr., married Mary Elizabeth Leverton, Jacob and Hannah Leverton’s daughter, in November of 1849. The Leverton’s lived very close to Thompson’s property at Poplar Neck; it is very likely that young Anthony met Mary Elizabeth while he was working with his brother Edward for their father in Caroline County.¹³⁹ Thompson’s slaves and hired labor, including Ben and Rit Ross and some of their children, would have known the Levertons. It is possible, then, that the Leverton’s may have played a role in Tubman’s escape.

Traveling mostly at night, following the North Star and stopping at each new house she was directed to, Tubman finally reached Pennsylvania, where “after a long and painful journey she found, in answer to careful inquiries, that she had at last crossed that magic ‘line’ which then separated the land of bondage from the land of freedom.” She later told Sarah Bradford, “when I found I had crossed that *line*, I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person. There was such a glory over everything; the sun came like gold through the trees, and over the fields, and I felt like I was in Heaven.” ¹⁴⁰

CHAPTER FOUR NOTES

¹ Robert Hayden, "Runagate Runagate," in The Norton Anthology of African American Literature, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997). 1506-1508

² This occurred sometime during the fall months, probably 1834-1836.

³ Where Rit was living at this time is not known. Two probable locations seem to be the most likely possibilities. Rit may have been living in Bucktown at the time of Harriet's injury, possibly living at the Brodess farm, after having served a year under the control of Polish Mills, a local Bucktown farmer in 1833, or she could have been hired out again to another master in the immediate area. Rit also could have been hired out to Anthony Thompson, though during the early 1830s Brodess and Thompson may have still been on unfriendly terms, thereby precluding any sort of hiring arrangement for Rit between the two men. Bucktown seems to be the most likely location for Tubman's recovery under the watchful eye of her mother.

⁴ Franklin Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, July 17, 1863.

⁵ Now known as Madison.

⁶ "Levin Stewart to Sundry Negroes." Dorchester County Court, Court Papers, 1797-1851. Original Papers. MDSA. Annapolis.. Levin Stewart died in Georgetown in 1826, but his body was returned to Dorchester County and interred in the cemetery at Old Trinity Church at Church Creek.

⁷ Levin also had a son named John Trevalion Stewart, and he was ten years older than his cousin, John T. Stewart, Joseph's son. John T. of Levin returned to Dorchester County after his father died in 1826. Choosing to live with his uncle Joseph at first, John T. of Levin then moved with his brother, Joseph, to land he purchased from his uncle, Joseph, at Henry's Crossroads in Vienna on the Nanticoke River, where they operated a store and merchantile business together.

⁸ James A. Stewart, "Valuable Plantation for Sale," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Cambridge, MD, July 13, 1844.

⁹ "Statement of Mrs. William Tatlock." In Earl Conrad, Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Microfilm, 2 reels vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: The New York Public Library.)

¹⁰ Frank C. Drake, "The Moses of Her People. Amazing Life Work of Harriet Tubman," *New York Herald*, New York, Sept. 22, 1907.

¹¹ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."; and Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 75.

¹² Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."

¹³ Drake, "The Moses of Her People. Amazing Life Work of Harriet Tubman."

¹⁴ Drake, "The Moses of Her People. Amazing Life Work of Harriet Tubman."

¹⁵ Jacqueline Jones, Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present. (New York: Vintage Books, 1986). 27

¹⁶ Jones, Labor. See especially chapter one. For another excellent examination of female slave life see, Deborah Gray White, Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987).

¹⁷ Jones, Labor. 27

¹⁸ Jones, Labor. 25-29.

¹⁹ For an look at recent research into the lives and labors of southern white mistresses and their relationship to their slaves, see, Marli Weiner, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998).; Catherine Clinton, The Plantation Mistress; Woman's World in the Old South. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).; Elizabeth. Fox-Genovese, Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 988).; Brenda E. Stevenson, Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).; and Stephanie McCurry, Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).; Orville Vernon Burton, In My Father's Heuse There Are Many Mansions. Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1985).; and J. William Harris, Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society. White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta's Hinterlands. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998).

²⁰ During the early 1830, Brodess would have had, assuming he had not sold any of the male slaves he had inherited or those born to Rit, at least four male slaves, possibly more, who were old enough to labor productively in the fields. They were, Sam, Frederick, Shadrach, and Robert. Ben, aged about 8 in 1830, would have been somewhat useful in the fields, and Henry aged 4 or 5 in 1830 was still to young to be considered a field hand. The possible female slaves at this time were Rit, Linah, and Soph. Mariah Ritty had

presumably been sold, and Harriet was still under ten years of age. Daughters of Linah and Soph would also have been too young to contribute to the fields or household production, though even at five, Kessiah could have helped around the house, as Harriet had hired out to do at the same age.

²¹ Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney, "Moses," *Freedmen's Record*, March 1865. 35.

²² Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."; and Bradford, Scenes. 75.

²³ Cheney, "Moses." p. 35.

²⁴ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."; and Bradford, Scenes. 75.

²⁵ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."

²⁶ This community is quite evident as demonstrated by an examination of the US Census 1820-1870 for the area centered on White Marsh, Harrisville, Oldfield and Buttons Neck Roads, south of Tobacco Stick [Madison] and Church Creek to the Blackwater River.

²⁷ Julius Sherrard Scott, III, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution." (Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University., 1986); Joseph B. Seth, Mary W. Seth, Recollections of a Long Life on the Eastern Shore. (Easton, MD: Press of the Star-Democrat, 1926). 9.

²⁸ Scott, "Currents". 9.

²⁹ "Sale," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Cambridge, MD. Lists property purchased by Joseph Stewart from Dr. A.C. Thompson as "Thompson's Range," "Westphalia," "Chamber's Chance," and "Thompson's Desire" for a total of approximately 420 acres.

³⁰ Walter E. Huelle, Footnotes to Dorchester History. (Cambridge, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1969). 63.

³¹ David S. Cecelski, The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

³² William S. Pettigrew to James C. Johnson, as quoted in Cecelski, Waterman's Song. 104.

³³ For further discussion of canal building in North Carolina see, Cecelski, Waterman's Song.

³⁴ Harriet Bowley, daughter of Binah Bowley, married David Linthicum.

³⁵ The Bowley brothers, Major, John, and Richard, and their cousin Simon Bowley were freed by Stewart during the 1840s. Held in bondage by Joseph Stewart, they were trained in a variety of skills related to shipbuilding. Once free, these Bowley men hired themselves out as ship carpenters, eventually building at least one ship in partnership with Joseph Stewart's son, John T. Stewart. See "Major Bowley to John Bowley, Richard Bowley, John T. Stewart." Chattel Records. MdHR 19626-1. loc 1/4/4/44, MDSA. Annapolis.. Major Bowley sells interest in "Vessel, now on the stocks at Steam Mill Wharf in Cambridge." The "Sandy Hill shipyard," near Cambridge was owned by John T. Stewart. See also Huelle, Footnotes. 63.

³⁶ Rit moved back to the Peter's Neck area and lived with Ben for an undetermined period of time, probably from about 1836 to the mid 1840s. See Bureau of the Census. United States Federal Census, 1840. Dorchester County, MD.

³⁷ This community is quite evident as demonstrated by an examination of the US Census 1820-1870 for the area centered on White Marsh, Harrisville, Oldfield and Buttons Neck Roads, south of Tobacco Stick, Woolford and Church Creek to the Blackwater River.

³⁸ Bradford, Scenes. 15.

³⁹ For a discussion of slave and free marriage, see, Thomas E. Will, "Weddings on Contested Grounds: Slave Marriage in the Antebellum South," *Historian* Vol. 62, no. 1 Fall, (1999): See also, Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). 25-33; John Tubman's role in Harriet's escape, and his subsequent marriage to a free black woman will be addressed in another chapter.

⁴⁰ "Certificates of Freedom." Dorchester County Circuit Court Records. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.. January 4, 1850, "Negro man John Tubman aged about 32 years, 5 feet 9 ½ inches high, dark mulatto complexion, with a small scar on back of left hand, also one other at the top of calf of left leg, was Born free and raised in Dorchester County. Identified by James Smith, S.C. [Slaughter Creek]". John Tubman's mother was most definitely a free woman, otherwise he could not have been born free. Another possibility, though more remote, for John's parents would be Tryphena and Planer Tubman. See also Elaine McGill, transcriber, Certificates of Freedom, Dorchester County Court 1806-1864. (Privately Printed, 2001). 59, 66, 76, 79, and for John Tubman, p. 84. After Harriet Tubman ran away, she claimed that a relative, Tom Tubman, participated in her rescues. He may have been one of John Tubman's free brothers. See "The Underground Railroad: Manuscript Materials Collected by Professor Seibert, Ohio University." Vol. 40. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA.. The 1840 census shows a John Tubman, head of a free black household, in the Parson's Creek District several dwellings from Ben Ross, Harriet's father. Nestled in the midst of a small free black settlement, this John Tubman, who is between 55 and 100 years old, also had a woman of the same age in his house, along with 2 females aged 10 to 24, two males under 10 and one 24 to 35 years of age. It is not known whether Harriet's husband, John Tubman, is in this

household, as this older Tubman could be John's uncle. It seems likely, however, that young John Tubman could have been living here, thereby placing him in close proximity to Harriet.

⁴¹ See Sanborn, "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'." Franklin B. Sanborn Papers. Box 1, Folder 5. Box 1, Folder 5, American Antiquarian Society. Worcester, MA..

⁴² By the early 1820s, agricultural leagues and forums were organizing throughout the region to help farmers better manage their farms, improve crop production and investigate new technologies in planting, harvesting, fertilizing, and new alternatives to the staple products of corn, wheat and other grains. Through these efforts, many farmers invested heavily in fruit trees and succeeded in perpetuating the viability of their farms; others gambled on the planting of mulberry trees to feed thousands of silk worms imported to produce the cocoons used in the manufacturing of silk thread, though they ultimately failed to become viable producers of silk.

⁴³ For an excellent discussion of Maryland's particular circumstances relating to free black labor, see Fields, Slavery., and Berlin, Slaves.

⁴⁴ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." See also "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'."

⁴⁵ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."; and Bradford, Scenes. 75.

⁴⁶ "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'." According to Sanborn, after Harriet married John Tubman she left her parents home and moved in with him, even though they "had different masters." See also, US Census 1840. Ben Ross is listed in the Dorchester County Census, Parson's Creek District, p. 5. In his household there are six free blacks. One male aged 0-10; 2 males 10-24; 1 male 36-55; 1 female aged 24-35, and one female 36-55. While all these people are shown as free, they may in fact not be. This error was made in several instances in this census year. While the older man is most certainly Ben, the older woman is probably Rit. The youngest child may be Moses, and the other three may be Ben and Rit's children, perhaps Henry and Ben and Harriet or one of her older sisters, Linah or Soph. Henry and Ben may have been working for Stewart as well. Edward Brodess is listed in the census with only three slaves on his property, one male aged 10-24, and two females aged 10-24. 1840. p. 12 Oral tradition also suggests that Harriet and John Tubman lived together at one point near or on the current Malone's Church property on White Marsh Road. (personal communication with John Creighton, referring to his interview with elder Walter Ross in Madison in the mid 1980s.) This church was built in 1864 on land deeded to the black community in 1862.

⁴⁷ The fates of Sam, Frederick, and Schadrach, slaves owned by Edward's father Joseph, mentioned in Anthony Thompson's guardian's account book for 1821 and 1822 are

unknown. As with Linah and Soph, perhaps Brodess also sold them out of the state to distant relatives or to a trader for sale to the Deep South.

⁴⁸ "Equity Papers 249." Dorchester County Circuit Court. Box 57. Loc. OR/8/12/2, MDSA. Annapolis, MD., "Bill of Complaint," May 12, 1852 for reference to the sale of Linah and her child. At least two other children were left behind: Kessiah Jolley Bowley and possibly her sister Harriet. Whether they were the children of Linah or Soph is not known, though it seems likely that Kessiah was the child of Linah, and perhaps Harriet might have been the child of Soph, though no records have surfaced to indicate this to be true.

⁴⁹ Benjamin Drew, . The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery rpt. 1969, Tilden G. Edelstein, ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1855). "Interview with James Seward," 27-28.

⁵⁰ "Gourney C. Pattison, William Pattison and Others Vs. Eliza Brodess, Eliza Brodess and John Mills Administrators of Edward Brodess, and Thomas Willis." Dorchester County Circuit Court (Equity papers). MDSA. Annapolis.. Testimony of Polish Mills. No record of the sale of Linah or Soph has been found either in the Dorchester, Talbot or Caroline County records. This is not unusual. Brodess probably conducted a deal privately with a less than scrupulous trader; selling Linah and Soph as slaves for life was an illegal transaction, for the women were to be free at age forty-five. Even if Brodess had sold them to relatives then living in Mississippi, Alabama, or Georgia, the transaction would have been illegal. Ben and Rit, and their son Henry, all thought Linah and Soph had been sold to Georgia. One of the sisters left two children behind. See "Henry Stewart," in John W. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977). 414, and "James Seward", in Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. 27-28. Also, in December 1842, the Sheriff of Dorchester County, William B. Dail, under order from the Dorchester County Court, ordered a sale of the majority of Brodess's assets, including approximately 270 acres of land, his home, several farm animals and one slave, "Ben, 19 years old." See William B. Dail, "Sheriff's Sale," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Cambridge, MD, December 24, 1842. Edward Brodess and his cousin Richard Pattison were being sued, though the record is unclear as to why. Brodess did not lose his property at this time, presumably because the suit was dropped and/or payment was made to satisfy the litigants in the case. This may coincide with the sale of Soph, who was being held in the local jail with her brother Henry because of Brodess's unpaid debts.

⁵¹ "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'."

⁵² Bolster, W. Jeffrey. Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997. 39-41.

⁵³ He would have needed a freedom certificate once he was freed, however, if he were to travel to Baltimore. Though no such recorded certificate has been found for Ben, this does not preclude the existence of one. He was a familiar face to workers on the waterfront in Dorchester County and the waterfront in Baltimore, he may have been able to safely travel back and forth without being challenged by white authorities. There is no evidence, though, to support this possibility.

⁵⁴ Drake, "The Moses of Her People. Amazing Life Work of Harriet Tubman." In fact, when Harriet was required to "draw a loaded stone boat," was probably using a sleigh of sorts called a stone boat which was used to haul hay and other agricultural produce in the fields. A stone boat could also be a shallow flat bottomed canal boat, used to transport goods through shallow and narrow canal. Alternatively, the only known stone, for instance, in Dorchester County would have been ballast from the holds of ships.

⁵⁵ Scott, "Currents". 18. See also Fields, Slavery.

⁵⁶ Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony. "William Cornish. Interviewed, 1863, Canada." William was a foreman much like Ben Ross. Cornish had long been eager to run away, but his close familial and community relationships made him hesitate to flee when he had opportunities. Thomas Dail died, however, in May 1853, throwing the estate into turmoil. William had always understood that he would be set free, but the will did not provide for his manumission. William took matters into his own hands and ran away in 1856. Ben Ross and his family would have known William Cornish and his family.

⁵⁷ See Scott, "Currents".; W. Jeffrey Bolster, Black Jacks: African American Seaman in the Age of Sail. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).; and Cecelski, Waterman's Song.

⁵⁸ "Last Will and Testament of Anthony Thompson." Register of Wills, Dorchester County Court House. Estate No. 0-65-C. Cambridge, MD. See also, "List of Anthony Thompson's Negroes, 1839." Levin Richardson Collection, 1758-1865. MS 1405. Maryland Historical Society. Baltimore, MD.; and McGill, Certificates of Freedom.

⁵⁹ The Bowley brothers, Major, John, and Simon, and their cousin Richard Bowley were manumitted during the 1840s by the will of Levin Stewart. Held in bondage by Josephs Stewart, Levin Stewart's son, until they were freed, they were trained in a variety of skills related to shipbuilding. Once free the Bowleys hired themselves out as ship carpenters, eventually building ships in partnership with Joseph Stewart's son, John T. Stewart. "Major Bowley to John Bowley, Richard Bowley, John T. Stewart." Liber. MdHR 19626-1. loc 1/4/4/44, MDSA. Annapolis.. See also, Huelle, Footnotes.

⁶⁰ McGill, Certificates of Freedom.; and also, for example, "Anthony C. Thompson to Sundry Negroes." Dorchester County Chattel Records 1851-1860. C 692-2, MdHR 19626-1. loc: 1/4/4/45, MDSA. Annapolis.

⁶¹ Thompson also gifted property to a William W. Thompson (relationship unknown), and money to his niece Barsheba Thompson (parentage unknown). There is some speculation that William may have been an illegitimate son, and Barsheba the daughter of another brother, possibly Edward.

⁶² No sale of a slave owned by Anthony Thompson during his lifetime has been found.

⁶³ Thompson provided for Ben's freedom five years after Thompson's death. Anthony Thompson died in 1836, and therefore Ben would have been freed in 1841.

⁶⁴ Frederick Douglass, Benjamin Quarles, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself. (1845; Reprint, Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1971). 45

⁶⁵ "Anthony Thompson Will."

⁶⁶ Interestingly, Anthony Thompson's son, Dr. Absalom Thompson manumitted most of his slaves in his own last will and testament written a month before his death in October 1842. Through staggered manumission schedules, Absalom arranged for the eventual freedom of most of his enslaved labor, much like his father had done before him. Absalom also bequeathed a home and money to Elizabeth More, a black woman who was probably Thompson's mistress, and he also provided for "a suitable English Education" for Mary Ann and James, More's and, possibly Thompson's, children. What became of Elizabeth More and her children is unknown. See "Last Will and Testament of Absalom Thompson." Talbot County Register of Wills. C1925. 1-43-4-27, MDSA. Annapolis. 241-245.

⁶⁷ "Anthony Thompson Will." According to the 1840 census, Jerry Manoke and Polly were between the ages of 55 and 100. Their youngest daughters, Mary (about 8 years old) and Susan (about 10 years old) are listed in this household. They are definitely not free, as Dr. Thompson sells Susan on April 22, 1847, to William V.M. Edmundson, for \$200. "Anthony C. Thompson to Wm. V.M. Edmundson." Chattel Records. WJ2, I C691. loc 1/4/4/44, MDSA. Annapolis.. Tragically, Edmundson sold Susan to Margaret Tindle, the wife of a slave trader. Miles Tindle was taken to court for selling Susan out of the state illegally. See Dorchester County Circuit Court Docket, April 1851, Appearance #7. Once Thompson had sold Susan the first time, he lost any control he had over her fate. While he may not have anticipated Susan's eventual sale to a trader, one does wonder why he sold her in the first place. Dr. Thompson was not his father, and in spite of Anthony Thompson's decision not to sell any of his slaves, Dr. Thompson would continue to do so, threatening the small semblance of security this community of slaves had come to know.

⁶⁸ "Anthony Thompson Will."

⁶⁹ Thompson did not, however, bequeath ownership of the land to Jerry Manoke and Ben Ross, as he did with his own sons. The land was only available to them during their life times, no longer. It is very unclear how this arrangement worked once Thompson's land was sold to other parties off after his death. Joseph Stewart, for instance, purchased several parcels of Thompson's property at Peter's Neck in 1837. The deed specifically mentions "old Ben's house" as part of the description of the property, but it makes no reference to allowing Ben to continue living on the property and cutting timber for his own use. See Deed. According to the 1840 US census for Dorchester County, Ben Ross and Jerry Manokey are both listed as living in the same area as Thompson's former plantation, surrounded by a majority of other free black households, some of which were also listed in the 1830 US census.

⁷⁰ The reason for this is unclear. Thompson was very specific about his manumissions. Ben was to be free five years after Thompson's death, which would have placed his liberation sometime during 1841. But according to Dr. Anthony C. Thompson's records ("*Anthony Thompson's List of Slaves.*"), Ben was to be manumitted in April in 1840.

⁷¹ See Dorchester County Land Records, "Samuel and Edward Harrington from James A. Stewart," 69 3WJ 53, June 22, 1846, which details the sale of former Thompson property, including 192 acres "now occupied by Mr. Parker, down by old Ben's"; and "Samuel and Edward Harrington from James A. Stewart," 69 3WJ 492.

⁷² See "List." Maria and Isaac Bailey eventually had eight children, and lived in the Bucktown area. The small sum of \$30 is quite puzzling, even if Aaron was disabled and Maria unproductive. Ben could have possibly traded his tenancy rights to the ten acres Anthony Thompson had provided for him in his will for Maria's and Aaron's freedom. Dr. Thompson and Absalom C.C. Thompson were eager to divest of their inherited lands – this may have been an incentive to Ben to give up his rights to a small part of it. The very same day that Ben purchased Maria and Aaron from Dr. Thompson, he manumitted them. See Certificates of Freedom and Chattel records.

⁷³ Chattel Records and "List." See also, Bureau of the Census. United States Federal Census, 1850. Dorchester County, MD.

⁷⁴ See "List."

⁷⁵ John D. Parker is listed in the 1840 census in the Parson's Creek district, in the area where Thompson had lived during his life. Next door to John D. Parker is Jerry Manoke, who is presumably living on the land Thompson provided for him in his will. Chattel records, April 8, 1853, FJH Vol. II p. 45 A.C. Thompson sold to John Parker, Sophia Brown, George Brown [9] and Charlotte Brown [7]. July 1853 A.C. Thompson of Caroline County manumitted S. Brown, 30 years old (Vol II p. 66) to be free at a later date – then he sold her to John Parker, and presumably her children George and Charlotte. Sophia then had another child, John. In the 1855 assessment records, John D.

Parker has in his possession, George, Charlotte and John Brown – so Anthony C. Thompson sold two of the children to Parker.

⁷⁶ See Dorchester County Court, Chattel Records. (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives.)

⁷⁷ See Census. 1850, Caroline County, MD. Edward Thompson, aged 20, is listed with 21 male slaves working in the timbering operation, and in his household there are seven white males, five of whom are “sailors.” Edward also had three adult female slaves and three juvenile male slaves at his residence.

⁷⁸ This property in Cambridge, fourteen and one half acres on the outskirts of Cambridge on Pine Street also had two slave houses on the property. See 1850 US census, Dorchester County, and “Assessment Record.” Dorchester County Board of County Commissioners. C687. MdHR 18,631, MDSA. Cambridge, MD. But the records of where Dr. Thompson’s slave women were located have not been found, therefore we do not know where they lived.

⁷⁹ For instance, see the *Cambridge Chronicle* for Thompson’s advertisements throughout the 1830s and 1840s. On May 1, 1847, Dr. Thompson notified his clients that he was no longer practicing medicine in Cambridge. Thompson, though maintaining his retail business for a few more years, was obviously turning his attention to his growing Poplar Neck timber and agicultural venture.

⁸⁰ See *Cambridge Chronicle*.

⁸¹ According to Frank Sanborn, Harriet spent her last two years in slavery with Dr. Thompson. Sanborn, “Harriet Tubman [July 17].” The 1850 US Census for Caroline County indicates that the great majority of Thompson slaves living and working at Poplar Neck are men. Where his female slaves were living and working remains a mystery.

⁸² Or, alternatively, Brodess refused to sell any of his slaves to Thompson because of an ongoing feud.

⁸³ Bradford, Scenes. 14.

⁸⁴ Bradford, Scenes. 14 “ ‘Pears like I prayed all de time,’ said Harriet; “ ‘bout my work, everywhere, I prayed an’ I groaned to de Lord. When I went to de horse-trough to wash my face, I took up de water in my han’ an’ I said, ‘Oh Lord, wash me, make me clean!’ Den I take up something to wipe my face, an’ I say, ‘Oh Lord, wipe away all my sin!’ When I took de broom and began to sweep, I groaned, ‘Oh Lord, wha’soebber sin dere be in my heart, sweep it out, Lord, clar an’ clean!’”

⁸⁵ Bradford, Scenes. 14-15. “I prayed all night long for master, till the first of March; an’ all the time he was bringing people to look at me, an’ trying to sell me. Den we heard dat

some of us was gwine to be sole to go wid de chain-gang down to de cotton an' rice fields, and dey said I was gwine, an' my brudders, an' sisters. Den I changed my prayer. Fust of March I began to pray, 'Oh Lord, if you ant nebber gwine to change dat man's heart, kill him, Lord, an' take him out ob de way.'... "Nex' ting I heard old master was dead, an' he died jus' as he libed. Oh, then, it 'peared like I'd give all de world full ob gold, if I had it, to bring dat poor soul back. But I couldn't pray for him no longer.' "

⁸⁶ Bradford, Scenes. 15. "Nex' ting I heard old master was dead, an' he died jus' as he libed. Oh, then, it 'peared like I'd give all de world full ob gold, if I had it, to bring dat poor soul back. But I couldn't pray for him no longer."

⁸⁷ Dorchester County Orphans Court, Orphans Court Records. Vol. T.H.H. 1. (Cambridge, MD.) 150

⁸⁸ "Estate Papers of Edward Brodess, #0-482." Dorchester County Register of Wills. Cambridge, MD.

⁸⁹ Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony. 415-416. Sarah Bradford wrote that they only believed that they were not to be sold out of the State of Maryland. Bradford, Scenes. (p. 15. Who informed them of this, or more importantly how they came to believe this is not known, as Brodess's last will and testament burned in the county courthouse fire in 1852.

⁹⁰ Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony. See also, Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Sons, 1886). "The word passed through the cabins that another owner was coming in, and that none of the slaves were to be sold out of the State. This assurance satisfied the others, but it did not satisfy Harriet." 25.

⁹¹ Bradford, Scenes. 107

⁹² "Will of Atthow Pattison, Est. #0-35-E." Dorchester County Court House, Registrar of Wills. Cambridge, MD.

⁹³ Dr. Anthony C. Thompson speculated that Rit probably gave birth to her last child, Moses, after she had turned forty-five, making Moses freeborn. See "Thompson Deposition." Equity Papers 249. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.

⁹⁴ Slaveowners could petition the court to allow such transactions, though there is no record of Brodess applying for a waiver of this law. Only the sale of one of these children, Rhody or Mariah Ritty, was recorded. See "Edward Brodess to Dempsey P. Kane". Vol. Liber 9 ER 624 p. 625, Dorchester County Land Records. (Annapolis, MD: MDSA, July, 1825). See also, Jeffrey R. Brackett, The Negro in Maryland. A Study of the Institution of Slavery. (1889; Reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969). 61. In 1796, Maryland passed a law making it illegal for "anyone who might transport, knowingly, from the State, and sell as a slave for life, any black entitled to freedom at any age." 60.

⁹⁵ According to Maryland laws, passed in 1790, slaveholders were allowed to manumit their slaves by will with no restrictions as to when the will had to be written. Prior to this date, slaveholders could not manumit slaves by will unless the will was written at least three months prior to the testator's death. In 1796 that was amended to reduce the age at which slaves could be manumitted, from age fifty to forty-five. Atthow Pattison's will satisfied all those legal requirements; he died six years after he wrote his will, and provided for manumission at age forty-five, thereby precluding any question as to the legality of his last will and testament. See Brackett, Negro in Maryland. 151-153.

⁹⁶ Elizabeth Pattison's children were Gourney Crow Pattison, James Pattison, Elizabeth, Mary, and Acsah.

⁹⁷ "Orphans Court Records." Dorchester County Orphans Court. T.H.H. 1. Dorchester County Registrar of Wills. Cambridge, MD. pp. 162-165. July-August, 1849. The real motivations for this legal action remain shrouded in mystery. The value of Rit's labor was inconsequential, as was the value of the labor of any of her children who were then forty-five years old or older. Why pursue this legal battle in court, at considerable cost to both parties? Gourney Crow Pattison was in fact living in Baltimore at this time; he had sold most of his inherited land and moved to Baltimore ten years earlier. Why did he return to Dorchester County to press this small claim? There may be several possibilities. A long standing feud with Brodess may have forced this issue, particularly after Edward died and Eliza was preparing to sell several of Rit's children. But the "residue" that would have been generated from Rit's labor, divided among the many heirs then at law in 1849, would have meant very, very small sums to each individual, which would seem even more inconsequential when factoring in the enormous legal fees generated by the lawsuit and the ensuing work to untangle the specific shares each heir was entitled to. A second possibility is that James A. Stewart, one of Dorchester County's most prominent lawyers and a legislator, may have initiated this lawsuit on behalf of Gourney Crow Pattison and the other Pattison heirs for political or personal reasons of his own. Brodess was not a rich, nor even a middle class man, and it is likely he and Stewart did not even travel in the same social circles. Was there a personal issue between them of some sort? We may never know. In 1852, however, when the lawsuit continued its path through the courts, James A. Stewart bought the rights and title to Rit and her children from the Pattison heirs for a paltry \$105 – indicating perhaps some confidence the court would find in his client's favor. It would seem then that this issue was becoming personal. What would Stewart want with an aged slave woman? This will be discussed further later in this chapter.

⁹⁸ At the time of Edward Brodess's death, his surviving children were: John E., aged 22; Joseph, 20; William Richard, 18; Charles 15; Benjamin B., 13; Thomas J., 11; Mary Ann Elizabeth, 9; and Henrietta Mariah, 6.

⁹⁹ Court, Orphans Court Records. 150

¹⁰⁰ "Equity Papers 394." Dorchester County Circuit Court. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.. In 1855 Eliza Brodess filed suit against John Mills, claiming that he had failed in his responsibility as administrator of her deceased husband's estate, and that he had withheld money obtained through selling various slaves owned by her. Because both Mills and Eliza Brodess died during the next couple of years, their estates continued the court fight. In 1859, Mills's brother, Polish, responded in court that Eliza had been indebted to John for \$1000.00, of which \$230 to \$240 plus interest was still owed Mills's estate.

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Brodess, "Negro for Sale [Harriet]," *Cambridge Democrat*, Cambridge, MD, June 27, 1849.

¹⁰² Brodess, "Harriet Sale."

¹⁰³ Jonathan Mills, "Negro for Sale [Kessiah]," *Cambridge Democrat*, Cambridge, MD, September 5, 1849.

¹⁰⁴ Mills, "Kessiah Sale."

¹⁰⁵ Court, Orphans Court Records. 172. September, 17, 1849.

¹⁰⁶ Harkless Jolley was owned by Ann Staplefort Grieves, who lived in the Church Creek area during this time period. Though it seems likely she is the daughter of Linah, she could also be the daughter of Soph, Tubman's other sister who was sold away. Kessiah's father is most definitely Harkless Jolley. One of Kessiah's daughters may have been named Linah, and she did name one son "Harkless." See 1861 Canadian Census, Chatham, Ontario. See also Kessiah Bowley. "Last Will and Testament of Kessiah Bowley, April 30, 1888," Registrar of Wills, Dorchester County Court House, Cambridge, MD:

¹⁰⁷ Court, Orphans Court Records. 172, September 17, 1849.

¹⁰⁸ Court, Orphans Court Records. October 24, 1849, p. 177.

¹⁰⁹ "Major Bowley to John Bowley, Richard Bowley, John T. Stewart." Straw Mile Wharf was owned by John T. Stewart. Straw Mile Wharf was owned by John T. Stewart. 62-63

¹¹⁰ Court, Orphans Court Records. October 24, 1849, p. 177. No documentation exists which details this Harriet's relationship to the Ross family. However, because Soph left two children behind when she was sold, and this Harriet was sold until she reached the age of forty-five, it seems likely that she is Kessiah's sister, and the granddaughter of Ben and Rit. Eliza Brodess's own slaves, which she brought from her family [Keene], were all slaves for life.

¹¹¹ "Thomas Willis from John Mills and Eliza Brodess." Liber WJ No. 3, p. 259. Loc. 1/4/4/44. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.. The name of the child has changed, although there it is the same person. This occurred quite often in local and county court records – in the recording and transcription process names and other details were often changed, particularly when slaves were involved.

¹¹² "William O. Cooper and Samuel Dunnock from Eliza Brodess." Liber WJ, No. 3, p. 286. Loc. 1/4/4/44. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.. Dawes Keene was most likely one of the slaves Eliza was given or inherited from her father, John Keene. Though a member of Tubman's extended household, he was more than likely not a blood relative.

¹¹³ There is no record of a court order authorizing the sale of "Minty" as she was then called by the Brodesses.

¹¹⁴ Eliza Ann Brodess, "Three Hundred Dollars Reward," *Cambridge Democrat*, Cambridge, MD, October 3, 1849. Interestingly, the advertisement was placed 16 days after Harriet and her brothers ran away.

¹¹⁵ Brodess, "Minty Reward."

¹¹⁶ Brodess, "Minty Reward." Interestingly, Brodess requested that the advertisement be copied to the Wilmington, Delaware newspaper, showing knowledge of a know route out of slavery from the Eastern Shore.

¹¹⁷ Bradford, Scenes. 16. "Interview with Helen W. Tatlock [Mrs. William Tatlock]." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York.. Bradford wrote that Harriet left first with three of her brothers; Tatlock told Conrad that she recalled Tubman telling her she fled first with two of her brothers. The runaway advertisement confirms Tatlock's version of the story.

¹¹⁸ Bradford, Scenes. 16.

¹¹⁹ Ben's marital status is unknown, although he may have been the father of two young boys, Ben and David Ross, whose mother remains unidentified. See "John D. Parker from Benjamin Ross." Dorchester County Chattel Records 1851-1860. C 692-2, MdHR 19626-1. loc: 1/4/4/45, MDSA. Annapolis; "John D. Parker from David Ross." Dorchester County Chattel Records. C 692-2, MdHR 19626-1. loc: 1/4/4/45, MDSA. Annapolis.. Robert's wife was Mary Manoke, and she was enslaved by Dr. Anthony Thompson. Henry's wife was Harriet Ann (last name undetermined); her status as a slave or free woman is unknown.

¹²⁰ "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'."

¹²¹ "Tatlock Interview."

¹²² Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." See also, as printed in Bradford, Scenes. 76; and "Statement of Mrs. William Tatlock," Conrad, Conrad/Tubman.

¹²³ "Statement of Mrs. William Tatlock," Conrad, Conrad/Tubman.

¹²⁴ The location on the Choptank River was ideally suited to Thompson's plans; he could ship out timber from the mouth of Marshy Creek, where there appears to have been a wharf, providing Thompson with the ability to export his timber once it had been felled and cut into boards, staves, and shingles. Living with Edward in the "big house" were six white sailors, one black laborer, three female slaves and three male children, also slaves. Edward also controlled more than 21 male slaves who were then timbering Thompson's land. These men probably lived and worked in the interior of the Thompson property, in small tents and cabins, in the area of present day Haverford Camp Road in the Marshy Creek area.

¹²⁵ Mills, "Kessiah Sale."

¹²⁶ Dr. Anthony C. Thompson was also a Methodist minister, and he may have had a small church built on his property in Caroline County (or it may have already been there when he purchased the property) for the convenience of preaching to his enslaved people.

¹²⁷ Kenneth Carroll, Quakerism on the Eastern Shore. (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1970). 132-138.

¹²⁸ Carroll, Quakerism.

¹²⁹ 1850 U.S. Census. Dorchester County, Maryland, District 1, p. 429. Thompson also owned a 450 acre farm in the area of Cordtown, slightly east of Cambridge. It is not believed that Thompson lived at this farm, but rather rented it out or had a hired manager who ran the farm.

¹³⁰ William T. Kelley, "Underground R. R. Reminiscences [April 2, 1898]," *Friends' Intelligencer*, April 2, 1898. 238. Noted Quaker and abolitionists Francis Corchran and his family left Dorchester County during the 1830s and 1840s to live in Baltimore and elsewhere in the North, where anti-slavery opinions were more actively, though cautiously, expressed.

¹³¹ "Statement of Mrs. William Tatlock," Conrad, Conrad/Tubman.

¹³² The exact identity or relationship of Mary to Tubman is not clear. It is not known whether this Mary is the same "Mary Ann" who was living in Ben and Rit's house on Dr. Thompson's property at Poplar Neck in 1850, or another member of Thompson's slave community. Without knowing her age, it may not be possible to know who this Mary is.

¹³³ Bradford, Scenes. 17-19.

¹³⁴ In 1865, Edna Cheney described Tubman as singing her farewell song as "she passed through the *street*." The use of the word "street" may have some significance, although we may never know. It is likely that the use of the word street implies a well traveled, and probably cobblestoned lane in a city such as Cambridge, as opposed to the dirt roads and paths in a more remote area such as Poplar Neck, or it may be that Cheney used the word without any thought to its implications. Unfortunately, the majority of Thompson's female slaves are unaccounted for in the 1850 census, so we cannot be sure as to where Tubman would have most likely been living. It is not known where John Tubman was living at this time, or whether Harriet was living with or near him at the time she fled, although according to Bradford, Harriet's husband "did his best to betray her, and bring her back after she escaped." Bradford, Scenes. 15. Tubman could have hired himself out to Dr. Thompson in Caroline County as well. It is not clear from the census records where John Tubman was living in 1850. One final clue may rest with Bradford. She wrote in her first Tubman biography that when Harriet returned to the Eastern Shore to bring away her brothers during Christmas 1854 and New Years 1855, they hid in the corn crib near Ben and Rit's cabin at Dr. Thompson's Poplar Neck farm; "Harriet had not seen her mother there for six years." Bradford, Scenes. 60. This would approximately coincide with her running away in the fall of 1849.

¹³⁵ Cheney, "Moses." 35

¹³⁶ Conrad, Conrad/Tubman. "Statement of Mrs. William Tatlock." The identities of these people remain unknown. Tatlock told Earl Conrad that Tubman told her the name of the first woman who helped her, but that she had, unfortunately, forgotten it.

¹³⁷ William T. Kelley, "Underground R. R. Reminiscences [April 19, 1898]," *Friends' Intelligencer*, April 19, 1898. 265. Jacob Leverton was sued for aiding a young slave woman who had run from her master after he beat her. This young woman fled North, and Jacob was immediately suspected. He "lost two farms" settling the lawsuit against him. See also, Carroll, Quakerism. Tubman may also have been helped by Jonah Kelley and his family, who were then living in Preston, Talbot County. Kelley, "Reminiscences, April 2, 1898." 238.

¹³⁸ Debra Smith Moxey, Newspaper Abstracts from the American Eagle and Cambridge Chronicle 1846-1857. (Cambridge, MD, 1995). See page 47 for Jacob Leverton's death; see also, Kelley, "Reminiscences, April 19, 1898." 265; and, Carroll, Quakerism. 142.

¹³⁹ Mary Elizabeth Leverton was "disowned" by the local Quaker Meeting in 1850 for several reasons. She was lax in her attendance at the Friends Meetings, she married a non-Quaker, and when she moved from the area they struck her from their membership lists. Mary Elizabeth and Anthony Thompson moved to Anne Arundel county in early 1850, where Anthony became a merchant, though they did return within a couple of years to Dorchester County. See Census. 1850, Anne Arundel Co., MD.

¹⁴⁰ Bradford, Scenes. 19 "When I found I had crossed dat *line*," she said, "I looked at my hands to see if I was de same pusson. There was such a glory ober ebery ting; de sun came like gold through the trees, and ober the fields, and I felt like I was in Heaben"

CHAPTER V

“MEAN TO BE FREE”: THE FRAGILE LIGHT OF LIBERTY¹

Harriet Tubman's escape was not, in fact, as unusual as it may seem. Despite stepped up efforts in Maryland and other Southern states to thwart escapes during the ten years before the Civil War, some slaves did marshal the strength and courage to take their liberty. With two hundred and fifty-nine recorded runaways in the 1850 census, Maryland held the lead of all the slaveholding states in the number of escapes. This number is misleadingly low: many slave owners did not report their losses to the census taker.² Eliza Brodess, for instance, did not report any slaves as fugitives in the 1850 census. A perusal of Eastern Shore newspapers for the period 1847-1849 indicates a steady flow of slaves running away from their masters, many of them in company with family and friends. Dr. Robert Tubman advertised in a January 1847, Cambridge newspaper for his slaves Comfort and her two daughters, Nice and Ann. This family took their liberty over the Christmas holidays when slave owners traditionally allowed their slaves to visit family and friends on other plantations. Dr. Tubman suspected they had gone far; his advertisements also ran in the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Delaware Journal*.³ Dorchester countians Peter Harrington and Henry McGuire advertised for Vince and Anthony Cornish on the same day Zachariah Linthicum sought the return of Martin Green, while William Willoughby offered a reward for the capture and return of Stephen and Peter Dockings.⁴ Throughout 1849, scores of slaves ran away from Talbot,

Dorchester and Caroline County slaveholders, and, while some were unsuccessful in getting away permanently, those who did reflect the strength of the underground network and underscore the slave's persistent hope for freedom and independence. Frustrated slaveholders suspected a conspiracy of abolitionists within their midst tempting slaves to run away, not considering, or admitting, that slaves wanted to be free and to get away on their own. The *Easton Star* of Talbot County, for instance, reported in August 1849:

RUNAWAYS. On Saturday night week, three slaves belonging to H.L. Edmondson, Esq., made their escape, and last Saturday night, one of Jas. L. Martin's Esq., one of Jos. R. Price's Esq., and one belonging to Mr. George Hale, also absconded, and nothing has been heard of any of them since. Almost every week we hear of one or more slaves making their escape and if something is not speedily done to put a stop to it, that kind of property will hardly be worth owning. There seems to be some system about this business, and we strongly suspect they are assisted in their escape by an organized band of abolitionists. We think it advisable for the Slave Holders of the Eastern Shore to establish a line of Telegraph down the peninsula, and organize an efficient police force along the line, as the most effectual means of protecting their slave property, and recovering such as may attempt to make their escape. At present, all efforts to recover them after they once made their escape appears fruitless.⁵

The following October at least 24 slaves in Talbot County "absconded" from their owners, and local authorities were in pursuit of those who aided their escapes. Col. Edward Lloyd, the largest slave owner on the Eastern Shore, offered a \$1,000 reward for the capture and return of two of the runaways. Some were apprehended, though the rest made their way "south east, across Caroline county to the Delaware Bay shore, and thence to New Jersey."⁶ By the end of the month, however, Talbot County authorities arrested two men whom they believed "enticed" the slaves to runaway; they were tried and convicted in December to much fanfare, although the *Baltimore Sun* mockingly reported that the "tax payers of Talbot have to foot the bill," in the amount of "one-thousand ninety-four dollars and ninety-seven cents."⁷

Slaves had been running away from their masters since Africans were forcibly brought to the colonies in the early 1600s. By the end of the 18th century, however, a more organized system had started to take shape, one that provided some measure of support to runaways finding their way to freedom. Runaways found this support in maroon or Native American communities, in a few states in the North that ended slavery within their borders in the years after the Revolution, and even among some groups in the South opposed to slavery. The Underground Railroad, as this organized system eventually became known, has long been shrouded in mysteries and myths, many of which date back to the time when the system was a reality.

Though the name, Underground Railroad, first appeared in the early 1830s (with the advent of the new transportation system by rail), the secret networks to freedom had, by then, long been in operation. As the anti-slavery movement expanded and became more organized, it attracted people from all walks of life and many religious organizations, including Methodists, Presbyterians, Unitarians, Jews, among others. Eventually, those few individuals within the broader abolitionist movement who helped runaway slaves find their way North to freedom became part of a loosely organized network. As the anti-slavery movement gained momentum, particularly after 1830, and far more communities, individuals, and small groups of likeminded people (especially in Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio, Indiana, New Jersey and Massachusetts) committed themselves to help end the institution of slavery, an active mission to help runaways was firmly and permanently established. Along the many roads to freedom, people who participated in this clandestine operation were known as “agents,” “conductors,” “engineers,” and “station

masters,” terms that mirrored positions on actual railroads even though guided escape from slavery encompassed many other pathways to freedom.⁸

Harriet Tubman, however, through her own actions and by the help of unknown Underground Railroad (URR) operators, made her way to Philadelphia, a city long a center of abolitionist activity. Here, she blended into a large community of free blacks and freedom seekers from the South. But Tubman was not entirely safe. Efforts were made by many slaveholders to retrieve their “property” in Philadelphia and other Northern cities and towns. It was important that slaveholders maintain control of their slave property, not only personally but also for the larger community of slaveholders. The system of slavery could only work if those enslaved believed the costs of escape would be too great, and the chances of successfully getting away too remote. Professional slave catchers and bounty hunters roamed the countryside and cities and towns, hunting runaways to take them back into slavery and receive a reward.⁹ A second runaway notice has not been found for Tubman, suggesting, possibly, that Eliza Brodess may have assumed she would return, as she had the first time with her two brothers, Ben and Henry. It seems unlikely that Brodess would have ignored Tubman’s escape, though she may not have realized Tubman was actually gone for some time. Eliza Brodess may not have even been aware that she was missing until Thompson informed her. Tubman’s practice of hiring herself out may have protected her for several days before anyone realized she was no longer in Dorchester or Caroline county.

Though Tubman was nominally free in Philadelphia, she soon learned that freedom did not ensure happiness. Liberation from slavery had its own reward, but Tubman told Bradford “there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a

strange land; and my home, after all, was down in Maryland; because my father, my mother, my brothers, and sisters, and friends were there. But I was free, and *they* should be free.”¹⁰ What set Tubman apart from thousands of other runaways, though, was her determination to act: she quickly set upon a plan to liberate her family. She easily found work as a domestic and a cook in various hotels and private homes in Philadelphia, and later, during the summer months, at Cape May, New Jersey.¹¹ She hoarded her money, planning carefully for the days ahead when she could return to the Eastern Shore to bring her family away to freedom. She kept in touch with events on the Eastern Shore by communicating with the extensive network of sources among the free black, fugitive black, and liberal white communities of Philadelphia, Baltimore, Wilmington, Delaware, and Cape May who shared information about the slave community. In this way, she was kept informed of the fate of her family on the Eastern Shore.

It would not be long before she would be forced to act to save a member of her family from the dreaded auction block. From relatives and friends in Baltimore, Tubman received word, as she had expected, in December 1850 that her niece, Kessiah, was once again going to being auctioned off at the courthouse in Cambridge. Tubman went immediately to Baltimore, lodging with friends and relatives then living along Baltimore’s busy and diverse waterfront. Harriet’s brother-in-law, Tom Tubman, concealed her until the appointed time.¹² Tom was possibly working as a stevedore on Baltimore’s docks; in fact, there were many former Dorchester County free blacks (and possibly some runaways and a few slaves who had been hired out to Baltimore, much like Frederick Douglass had been) living and working in Baltimore.¹³ John and Tom Tubman’s brother Evans, a seaman, also lived there, as did several Bowleys, Manokeys,

and others from the Eastern Shore black community, all laboring along Baltimore's busy docks and shipyards. The work assignments and living arrangements of many of these individuals made Baltimore's waterfront an ideal location from which Tubman could operate. These friends and family members were also perfectly positioned to receive news from Dorchester County about any threats to Harriet's family.

With little time to prepare, Harriet and Kessiah's husband, John Bowley devised a scheme to spirit Kessiah and her two children away. By way of messages sent through black mariners, or free blacks traveling back and forth from Cambridge, all aspects of the plan were put into motion. On the day of the auction, a small crowd of buyers assembled in front of the courthouse doors a little before lunchtime. In front of them stood Kessiah and her two young children, James Alfred and Araminta. The spirited bidding started; the price for a healthy young female slave with two children could have been five or six hundred dollars at that time. For agonizing moments the bidding continued, and a buyer was finally secured; John Brodess, acting for his mother, was satisfied by the sale. Kessiah was removed from the courthouse steps and set aside while the auctioneer went to dinner. But when the auctioneer returned and called for payment, no one came forward. "It was found after the sale that she was purchased by her husband, a Negro man, who when called failed to comply."¹⁴ Recognizing a ruse, the auctioneer started the bidding again, only to discover that Kessiah and the children were nowhere to be found; unbeknown to the crowd at the courthouse, she and the children had been taken and hidden in "a [lady's] house only a 5 minutes walk from the courthouse."¹⁵ Later that evening, John Bowley secretly took his wife and children on a "small boat," or log canoe, to Baltimore.¹⁶ A skilled sailor with contacts throughout the Eastern Shore and

Baltimore, Bowley knew his best, and swiftest, chance for escape was by water. This perilous journey would have taken a full day of sailing up the Chesapeake to get to Baltimore, and, given the time of year, it might have taken longer. With unpredictable weather, often cold and wet, the journey to Baltimore was incredibly risky; with two small children, the escape was even more so. If they were caught, John Bowley risked being sold into slavery. Perhaps seeking shelter in black waterfront communities like Bellevue on the Tred Avon River in Talbot County or other such safe places known to him, Bowley successfully reached Baltimore. There they met one of Bowley's brothers, possibly Major, and they all found safety with Tubman, who hid them among friends. After recuperating for a few days, Tubman safely brought them on to Philadelphia.¹⁷

Emboldened by her success, and fearful for the safety of her family, Tubman returned to Baltimore a few months later, this time to bring her brother, probably Moses, and two other men to freedom.¹⁸ Tapping into the same maritime networks of communication she used to help Kessiah and her children escape, Tubman was once again successful in executing a successful flight without returning to Dorchester County herself.

In the fall of 1851, however, Tubman decided to return to the Eastern Shore for the first time since she had run away, in order to bring away her husband, whom she had not seen for two years. She saved up her earnings, bought him a new suit of clothes, and ventured back to Dorchester County.¹⁹ How she did this is unknown; she may have taken passage on a boat, or traveled by foot, following the same path she took north to freedom two years earlier. When Tubman arrived there, though, she discovered that John had taken another wife, a free woman named Caroline. Rather than create a scene, she

hid with friends nearby and sent word to John that she was waiting for him. But he refused to join her; he had moved on and was content to continue with his life in Dorchester County. Devastated, Harriet determined to “go right in and make all the trouble she could,” not caring if she was caught by her master.²⁰ Spurned by her lover, overwhelmed with anger and hurt, she could hardly bear the loss of her dreams for a free future with her husband. But, she later told an interviewer, she soon realized “how foolish it was just for temper to make mischief,” and that if her husband “could do without her, she could do without him,” so she “dropped [him] out of her heart.”²¹ She decided not to waste an opportunity, though, and instead gathered a “party” of slaves and brought them to with her Philadelphia.²²

Always doubtful, the prospects for permanent freedom and safety for runaway slaves in the north diminished even more so in 1850. Frustrated over the increasing numbers of runaway slaves from their plantations, farms and homes, particularly in the Border States, southern slaveholders and the elected officials who represented them, perceived an imbalance of power in Congress that threatened the institution of slavery. Free-soil Democrats and Northern Whigs had gained control of Congress when President Zachary Taylor took office in 1849. Promptly advocating the admission of California and New Mexico as free states, Taylor, together with Northern Whigs and most Northern democrats hoped to curb the expansion of slavery beyond the existing southern slave states. The admission of these two states would have tipped the balance of power in Congress, from slaveholding southern interests to non-slaveholding northern interests, and southern representatives thundered defensive, threatening disunion. After months of debate and argument, Congress sought to enact a compromise to stave off what many

believed would be an irreparable sectional conflict and, perhaps, civil war. As part of the famous Compromise of 1850, Congress admitted California as a free state, which led to an imbalance of free and slave states. To offset this concession to anti-slavery sentiment, though, Congress also passed a new Fugitive Slave Act to placate Southerners, in September 1850. The Act required federal judges, marshals, and commissioners to convene special commissions, or courts, to assess the valid status of an accused runaway slave. Slave catchers searching in the north for their slaves were given the power to force cooperation from local authorities for the return of their slave property.²³

Anyone obstructing the efforts of slave owners trying to retrieve their slaves, or who helped a slave escape, was subject to heavy fines and jail time. Under this law, Northern police authorities were bound by federal law to capture and return to their “owners” any runaway or fugitive slave caught within their jurisdiction. This new law created an uproar in the Northern states where it was perceived as an infringement upon local control and state sovereignty, and as more and more runaway slaves were captured and forcibly returned to the control of their enslavers, Northern abolitionists actively encouraged resistance to this new law. Several high-profile and widely publicized captures of runaway slaves marshaled the fury of Northerners; not just abolitionists, but other Northerners, who resented being forced to act as agents for seemingly powerful southern slave interests, also resisted its terms. Abolitionists were infuriated by the act’s powerful clauses and in the North several slaves who had been turned over to their slave owners were dramatically rescued. In some cases, participants were severely wounded in battles with authorities and slave catchers. In one instance a slave owner was killed by an

angry group of whites and blacks who were attempting to prevent the re-enslavement of a runaway then living in Pennsylvania.²⁴

After passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, and it became apparent that some southerners were determined to use the law to their advantage, Tubman and her family and friends were no longer safe in Philadelphia or any other Northern city. The stakes were now greater and the threat more palpable as southern slaveholders pursued their runaway slaves aggressively with the force of the federal government behind them. Though almost immediately after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, southerners traveling North to capture and take back their enslaved property met with resistance from local whites and blacks in cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, and New York, it quickly became clear that the law imposed a far greater risk that any captured runaways would now be returned promptly to the South.

For runaways living in the North, the issue of safety became paramount by the fall and winter of 1851; many fugitives began a second journey from their homes in northern cities and towns to a more secure freedom in Canada.²⁵ John and Kessiah Bowley, and their daughter Araminta, moved out of Philadelphia and onto Canada in late 1851, possibly with other runaways who had also decided their liberty was at too great a risk in Philadelphia. Yet, Tubman continued to plot and plan; members of her family remained enslaved and she could not rest until she brought them away, too. With her husband living with another woman, Tubman turned her attention to bringing other family members and friends away from Maryland's Eastern Shore.

After Tubman's failed attempt to bring her husband North in the fall of 1851, she may have returned to Dorchester again, in December, and bringing out a group of eleven

slaves, including another “brother” and his wife.²⁶ There are no details about this rescue; though reported by Sanborn as a separate trip, in fact, Tubman may have just brought the eleven fugitives she had already brought away during 1850 and 1851, and guided them all the way to Canada in December.²⁷ Nevertheless, taking a route out of Philadelphia to New York City, then onto Albany and Rochester, N.Y., this large group sought shelter with none other than Frederick Douglass. In his autobiography, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, written in 1881, Douglass described event:

On one occasion I had eleven fugitives at the same time under my roof, and it was necessary for them to remain with me until I could collect sufficient money to get them on to Canada. It was the largest number I ever had at any one time, and I had some difficulty in providing so many with food and shelter, but, as may well be imagined, they were not very fastidious in either direction, and were well content with very plain food, and a strip of carpet on the floor for a bed, or a place on the straw in the barn-loft.²⁸

In his first autobiography, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, published in 1845, Douglass explained to his readers that he could not reveal the secret network of supporters who populated the Underground Railroad.²⁹ Fearing for their safety and positions in southern society, Douglass could not identify people without jeopardizing their lives and livelihoods; though he eventually revealed the names of his fellow agents in the North in a later autobiography, he maintained his silence about the Southern operators for the rest of his life.³⁰ There is no doubt, however, that Tubman had tapped into some of the same network that helped Douglass run away in 1838 and stay secreted in the North, and it was this same network, ever expanding throughout the 1840s and 1850s, which helped Tubman ferry her friends and family North to freedom. By 1881, however, Douglass obviously felt some ease in naming the Northern agents along the Underground Railroad among whom he secretly cooperated, one of many faces along

a central New York route to Canada, assisting the flights of runaway slaves. According to Douglass, the route through which he operated a station “had its main stations in Baltimore, Wilmington, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, and St. Catharines (Canada).” The stations were manned by the same abolitionists with whom Tubman would also become so intimately involved with: Thomas Garrett, of Wilmington, Delaware; J. Miller McKim, William Still, Robert Purvis, Edward M. Davis, Lucretia and James Mott, and many others in Philadelphia; David Ruggles, Isaac T. Hopper, among others, in New York City; the Mott sisters, Stephen Myers, John H. Hooper and others in Albany; and the Reverends Samuel J. May and J. W. Loguen of Syracuse. In Rochester, J. P. Morris and Douglass, Amy and Isaac Post, and others, who sent them along Buffalo and Canada, greeted weary fugitives.³¹

Tubman later told Wilber Seibert, whose early work on the Underground Railroad helped document the legions of known and unknown stationmasters and operators involved in this secret organization, that when she left Philadelphia with a party of runaways, she “proceeded by steam railroad to New York, where David Ruggles gave her assistance,” and from there she took the train to Albany, “where Stephen Myers looked after her and her charges.”³² From there she boarded a train bound for Rochester, “where the fugitive slave, Frederick Douglass, would see that she got on the train for the Suspension Bridge and St. Catherine’s in Canada. On one occasion Harriet took eleven fugitives to Douglass’s house.”³³

Little documentation exists that definitively points to any relationship between Douglass and Tubman prior to Tubman’s own liberation. While they admired each other greatly, both publicly and privately, Douglass and Tubman never revealed the true extent

of their interactions or relationship, if any, on the Eastern Shore or in the North.³⁴ There may be several reasons for this, including the necessity of protecting vulnerable blacks and whites still living in Maryland. Nevertheless, Douglass and Tubman may have had extensive common ties on the Eastern Shore. Dr. Absalom Thompson, Dr. Anthony Thompson's brother, lived at Mary's Delight, at Bayside in Talbot County, which was situated next to the farm where Frederick Douglass, then known as Fred Bailey, lived for a period of time while hired out to Edward Covey, a local farmer. It was to Covey's farm that Douglass, as a young defiant slave in 1834, was sent to be "broken," as Douglass recalled, for Covey "had acquired a very high reputation for breaking young slaves."³⁵ After his year with Covey, Douglass was hired out to William Freeland, another local farmer, whose property was also near Thompson's plantation, Mary's Delight.³⁶ All of these farms were not far from the town of St. Michael's, where Douglass's master Thomas Auld lived, and, not surprisingly, both of the Thompsons, Auld, and their families, traveled in the same social circles. In an effort to discredit Douglass's famous 1845 autobiography, Absalom C.C. Thompson, Dr. Absalom Thompson's son, publicly claimed in the *Delaware Republican*, the *Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison's renowned anti-slavery newspaper, and later, the *Albany Patriot*, that he knew "Frederick Bailey," the illiterate slave, quite well. Hoping to prove Douglass as a fraud, A.C.C. Thompson, in fact, both verified that Douglass had been a slave named Frederick Bailey, and affirmed the veracity of the names and places which Douglass described so faithfully in his first autobiography, the *Narrative of Frederick Douglass*.³⁷ "I was for many years a citizen of the section of the country where the scenes of the ... narrative are laid; and am intimately acquainted with most of the gentlemen whose characters are so shamelessly traduced" by

Frederick Douglass, Thompson wrote.³⁸ A series of letters between the two men was reprinted in various anti-slavery newspapers for the Northern abolitionist community to read. Douglass taunted Thompson, offering him “thanks for his free and unsolicited testimony, in regard to my identity.” Thompson had claimed Edward Covey was a “plain, honest farmer,” that Thomas Auld, Douglass’s owner, was a “respectable merchant ... and an honorable and worthy member of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” and that all the rest whom Douglass disparaged in his *Narrative* were “charming,” “honest,” “respectable,” and “irreproachable.” Douglass, however, remembered their ill tempers, the harshness of the hunger and humiliation he felt at their hands, and the searing pain of the lash. Other white citizens of Talbot County wrote letters of support for fellow slaveholders mentioned in the *Narrative*; Dr. Anthony Thompson even entered his opinion on the matter, writing a short note in defense of Thomas Auld, but the damage was done.³⁹

If Douglass and the Thompsons knew each other, then did Douglass know Tubman and her family before he fled Maryland in 1838? Anthony Thompson owned several slaves with the surname Bailey and it seems more than likely that Ben Ross knew Frederick Bailey and his extended family, including the members of Douglass’s family who were sold away. Because the Thompson slaves, both Anthony’s and Absalom’s, traveled back and forth between Dorchester and Talbot counties to labor on the plantations of both men, there is a strong likelihood that many of them knew Douglass. In 1842, Ben Ross purchased the freedom of Maria Bayley [Bailey] and Aaron Manoka [Manokey] from Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, who had inherited them from his father, for the incredibly small sum of ten dollars. Maria, a young slave woman in “delicate”

condition, was married to Isaac Bailey, who shared the same name as Douglass's grandfather. Isaac and Maria later lived in Bucktown, raising their eight children there until Isaac was murdered in 1859. Ultimately, the communication network that functioned between Baltimore and the Eastern Shore, and between Talbot, Dorchester, and Caroline counties, was dependent upon people Douglass and Tubman knew in common. It is thus not only likely, but also highly probable that Douglass and Tubman shared strong familial and community relationships throughout the Chesapeake, ties that eventually encompassed runaways and free blacks living in cities and towns throughout the North.⁴⁰

After ferrying the party of eleven fugitives through Douglass's house in Rochester, New York, then on to Canada, Tubman remained in St. Catharines for several months. Arriving in late December, they had no food supplies, shelter, or appropriate clothing for the severe winter months ahead in this foreign Canadian climate. "The first winter was terribly severe for these poor runaways. They earned their bread by chopping wood in the snows of a Canadian forest, - they were frost-bitten, hungry and naked."⁴¹ Harriet "kept house" for her brother and the rest, working and praying, and "carried them by the help of God through the hard winter."⁴² They managed well enough, with the help of local aid associations and other friends and family in the area, so Harriet returned to Philadelphia the following spring, determined to earn enough funds, again, to bring away the rest of her family from Maryland. That summer she worked in Cape May as a cook, and from there, she returned again in the fall 1852 to the Eastern Shore, bringing away an unidentified group of nine slaves.⁴³

Tensions were rising on the Eastern Shore, however, as national politics came to bear on Maryland's social, political, and economic foundations. Debates over the nature of slavery and its place in American society, and its extension into the new territories, dominated daily life, as representatives of the South and North fought over control of the legislative process. In Dorchester County, free blacks were organizing themselves in response to continued pressure to emigrate to Liberia as part of the Maryland Colonization Society's attempts to rid the state of free blacks. Instead, these free black women and men attempted to stake a claim to the political and economic decision making processes in Maryland.⁴⁴ On the Eastern Shore, slave escapes continued unabated, frustrating local authorities who were increasingly looking toward Northern abolitionists as the root cause of their problems, both in losses in slave property, politics, and economics.

During the early morning hours of Sunday, May 9, 1852, an unknown arsonist set fire to Dorchester County's courthouse. Most of the county's Orphan's Court records were destroyed, erasing two hundred years of probate, land, tax, and some criminal and civil court proceedings. The arsonist was never discovered, in spite of a \$1000 reward for information leading to an arrest.⁴⁵ Two crucial volumes of documents did survive the fire: the "rough & the recorded minutes" of the county Court had been removed from the courthouse on Friday by the court clerk, who planned to work on them over the weekend.⁴⁶ Covering the years 1846 through 1852, these volumes provide, in many cases, the only view into the political, economic, social and familial dramas occurring in the county. But these books also contain some of the only surviving records available

regarding the disposition of Harriet Tubman's family and document the dangers for her family and friends, who were at the mercy of their white owners and neighbors.

Stunned Dorchester countians scrambled to recover from their loss. The Court was removed to a local hotel, the Dorchester House, and the trial docket was resumed, while county clerks began the process of recovering and reconstructing the court's voluminous records. Thomas H. Hicks, Registrar of Wills, called upon all residents of the county to deposit copies of wills, guardianship papers, indentures, land and tax records, and any civil and criminal suit court documents to replace those lost in the great fire. As luck would have it, the Pattison family had another copy of Atthow Pattison's will, so James A. Stewart, the Pattison's attorney, continued to appeal their claim against Eliza Brodess for ownership of Rit. In fact, the Pattison's appeal was the first order of business to come before the court after the great fire, on Tuesday morning, May 12.

James A. Stewart, a local Dorchester County lawyer, politician, and businessman, had known Tubman and her family for decades; his brother John had hired Tubman and possibly her father years before, and it is likely that her brothers may have been hired out to the Stewarts as well. By the time Tubman ran away, Stewart's involvement in the Pattison's protracted legal battle against Eliza Brodess over ownership of Rit and her children seemed of little significance, although he was one of the most powerful attorneys on the Eastern Shore. Involved in politics for over twenty years, a leading member of the Eastern Shore's aristocracy, and elected as a Democratic Representative to Congress from Maryland in 1855, Stewart was a powerful and controlling figure in Dorchester's political, social and economic spheres. He owned over forty slaves, buildings, ships, farms, and timber throughout the Eastern Shore and in Texas, sat on boards of banks and

businesses, and, by the mid 1850s, his political career was flourishing. Why did this powerful man take on this case and appeal it? Was it personal for Stewart, or was there more to this lawsuit than is recorded in the case record?

For some reason, the case was important to win, and Stewart pursued it with vigor. He quickly re-entered the Pattison's suit, claiming that the Pattison's were still entitled to "Rittia and such of her children as are now forty-five years of age and account for the hire and services of the same since that age and make a proper allowance of damages."⁴⁷ Stewart also demanded that the remaining slaves under the age of forty-five be sold and the proceeds be apportioned according to the "respective rights" of the Pattison families involved. Eliza Brodess refused, and the case dragged on for three more years.⁴⁸ Depositions, corroborating testimony and supporting documents were entered into the court record, leaving an extensive paper trail.

Then, oddly, on July 28, 1852, Stewart purchased from Thomas Willis the young slave woman, Harriet, Tubman's niece whom Willis had bought from Eliza Brodess two years earlier. One of Rit and Ben's granddaughters, Harriet had been sold in spite of the Pattison's attempts to prevent the sale until the lawsuit could be appealed. But Stewart did not buy Harriet's daughter, Mary Jane [Mary Ann]; the four-year-old remained in Thomas Willis's household with two-year-old Sarah Ann, possibly another child of Harriet's. Willis and Stewart lived several miles apart from one another, taking Harriet far from her children.⁴⁹ The cruelty of this sale is only compounded by what may have been a political or personal agenda on the part of Stewart, for less than four months later, Stewart purchased the "right, title, claim and demand" in Rit from his client, John Brown, a Pattison heir, for a total of \$30.00. The following June (1853) Stewart purchased the

same rights to Rit from another Pattison heir, Aschah Pattison, for \$75.00, in spite of the unknown outcome of the pending lawsuit.⁵⁰ The other Pattison heirs did not sell their interest in Rit to Stewart. Perhaps Stewart was gambling that the lawsuit would ultimately find in his client's favor, and he stood to gain something from his share in the residual value of Rit and her children then over the age of forty-five, and the future income stream from the rest of her children as they, too, turned forty-five. But the case seemed ill conceived from the beginning, and the ultimate value of a share in Rit, after divisions were made among all the heirs, appears to be quite small. Did Stewart have another reason for buying ownership in this family of slaves? Or, did he do this to protect Rit and her children?

The latter seems quite unlikely, though not impossible. Stewart was, however, a staunch defender of slavery, and his seemingly heartless decision to remove most of his slaves from Dorchester County to Texas in 1855, leaving behind their families and friends, does not fit the image of a benevolent white slaveholder. Perhaps there was personal animosity toward Brodess, though nothing in the records indicates this to be the case. Ultimately, Stewart lost his gamble; the case dragged on for so long, and, by the time the case was finally dismissed for the last time, both Eliza Brodess and Jonathan Mills were dead.

The Rosses may have been confused and frustrated by the continuing court action; Rit believed she was supposed to be free, and yet white people were still trying to keep her enslaved.⁵¹ When Harriet returned to Dorchester County in the fall of 1852, she may have been unaware of the lawsuit then reemerging in the courthouse; however it did not alter her ultimate goal of retrieving her family and bringing them away from their

enslavers. Anxious to get away before they could be sold to the Deep South, Tubman's remaining three brothers, Robert, Benjamin and Henry also attempted to escape several more times after their first failed attempt, with Harriet, in 1849. Though unsuccessful in their efforts, the lawsuit worked in their favor; Brodess was prevented from selling them until the case could be resolved, giving them time to effect a successful escape on their own, or until Tubman could come and help them.

Tubman would not give up, either; facing increasing danger, she became more dedicated to her decade long mission of liberation. What set Tubman apart from even those brave souls who swelled the routes of the URR were her trips back home. For self-liberators like Tubman, it was unusual to return to the land of their enslavers, risking capture and re-enslavement, or even lynching to help others seek their own emancipation. As tensions continued to rise throughout the country over the issue of slavery in the 1850s, Harriet Tubman intensified her efforts. Tapping into the powerful communication and relief networks of the black community as well as the white abolitionist community in the North, Tubman began to gain recognition and notoriety among a small group of radical anti-slavery activists committed to the end of slavery. Driven by her desire to liberate her family and friends, guided by an unquestioning belief in God's protection, and confident in the vast underground network she had come to know so well, Tubman returned several times to the Eastern Shore to guide groups of slaves to Northern freedom.

Relying heavily on the maritime skills and communication networks of the many free and enslaved blacks who plied the waters of the Chesapeake, and the many land routes throughout the Eastern Shore to central Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey

that were populated by free blacks, slaves and friendly whites (and even a few unfriendly whites who could be paid off), Tubman's success rate was remarkably high.⁵² In total, Tubman successfully made between eleven and thirteen trips, spiriting away somewhere in the neighborhood of seventy to eighty slaves, in addition to perhaps fifty or sixty more to whom she gave detailed instructions, nearly all from Dorchester and Caroline counties in Maryland.⁵³ Tubman "would never allow more to join her than she could properly care for though she often gave others directions by which they succeeded in escaping."⁵⁴

Though the percentage of successful escapes compared to the many failures cannot be known or estimated, Maryland's self liberators benefited from several factors which weighed heavily in favor of their ultimate goal of freedom. First, they were close to a free state. Second, these runaways were favored by the existence of heavily traveled north-south trade routes populated with free black families, by the water traffic throughout the region which was itself dependent on free and enslaved black labor, and potential self liberators could travel by road, boat, train or canals when making an escape plan. As in other slave communities, some slaves and slave owners on the Eastern Shore had become accustomed to a "tradition of short-term individual desertion," which allowed some slaves the flexibility to visit with relatives, avoid work assignments, or trade, hunt, or fish illegally.⁵⁵ Though punishments could be severe, such absences became a fact of life on some plantations.

This practice of short-term desertion from plantations certainly worked in Tubman's favor, giving her time to leave Dorchester county with her charges before their departures were noticed. Tubman carefully organized her escapes to leave on a Saturday evening because newspapers were not printed on Sundays and no runaway slave advertisements

could be taken out until Monday. She then set a pre-arranged meeting place for those prepared to risk their lives for freedom. Though she “was never seen on the plantation herself,” she arranged for a particular meeting place at an appointed time, for her own safety as well as those who were to join her.⁵⁶ Choosing a rendezvous point, sometimes eight or ten miles away from the plantations or homes of the runaway slaves and their masters, protected Tubman from discovery should any of the freedom seekers get caught as they attempted to flee their neighborhoods. One former slave recalled that Tubman chose a cemetery as a rendezvous point, a clever and simple choice. A group of slaves gathering in a cemetery might not arouse attention a group of black people gathering in a home, or even secretly in the woods might do.⁵⁷

She preferred the winter, when the nights were long, although she did lead parties out of Dorchester in the spring and fall as well. Like most runaways, she usually traveled at night; “by day they lay in the woods,” or other hiding places. The geography of the Eastern Shore, with its wide tracks of timber, numerous estuaries, swamps, and tidal marshes, creeks and inlets, provided for adequate cover for runaways, and various opportunities to effect escape. But Tubman herself apparently moved about during the day in pursuit of food and information, as she “had confidential friends all along the road,” who could be trusted to help her while her companions stayed safely secreted in the woods.⁵⁸

Tubman also guided her groups of fugitives by singing spirituals and other songs with coded messages. If danger lurked nearby, Tubman would sing an appropriate spiritual to warn her parties of an impending threat to their safety. When the road was clear, she would change her words or the tempo of the song and guided them on to the

next safe place. She paid free blacks to follow white slave masters and slave catchers as they posted reward notices, for the runaways she was trying to help escape, and tear them down. Absolute commitment was required of all members of her parties; the weakness of one person could endanger the whole group. After first satisfying herself that “they had enough courage and firmness to run the risks,” she would complete her plans for their escape.⁵⁹ Tubman carried a pistol, not only as protection from pursuers, but as added encouragement to weary and frightened runaways who wanted to turn back. A dead fugitive could not inform on those who helped him or her. Whether Tubman would have actually used the pistol in such a case we cannot know. Elizabeth Brooks of New Bedford, Massachusetts, recalled that Henry Carrol, a runaway from Maryland who took flight with Tubman, wanted to stop for a rest, even though slave catchers were closing in quickly.⁶⁰ Harriet told him, “go on or die,” and he quickly moved along.⁶¹

Disguising herself frequently as an elderly woman or man, Tubman’s “trickster” skills thwarted catastrophe several times along the way to freedom. During one complicated rescue of a large group of slaves, Tubman found herself confronting a small group of Irish laborers on a bridge, probably in Delaware. Sensing imminent danger, and knowing that she and her charges could not run, Harriet strolled up to the group and engaged them in a conversation about Christmas. The white men were curious, though; “what was her business,” they asked. Her first ruse having failed, she launched into another topic – finding herself a new husband. “She had one colored husband and she meant to marry a white gentleman next time,” she told them. Tubman cleverly deflected suspicion away from her group of runaways, to “a subject of absorbing general interest, matrimony,” – especially matrimony between the races.⁶² Tubman employed a strategy

that exploited what she may have perceived were the prurient racial and sexual interests of these workingmen. The ruse was successful and the group safely passed beyond the bridge, where “they all had “a great laugh so they went thro’ the town all together laughing and talking,” decreasing the likelihood they would all be stopped again.⁶³

Tubman said she could tell time “by the stars, and find her way by natural signs as well as any hunter.”⁶⁴ She often traveled in the woods at night alone, where she was comforted by what she called a “mysterious Unseen Presence” that her cares and fears often vanished. Her seizures continued throughout this time period, and the religious visions accompanying them often comforted her, lifting “her up above all doubt and anxiety into serene trust and faith.”⁶⁵ While disquieting to those who accompanied her on her rescue missions, Tubman’s accepting attitude about her seizures bespoke an overall confidence that she had in placed in God’s will that was reassuring to those around her.

Tubman’s success in freeing slaves should not be allowed to diminish the enormous obstacles she surmounted in assisting runaways. There was the constant fear of relentless slave catchers, who were armed with guns, knives and whips and who hunted with vicious dogs that were trained to attack human beings. Natural barriers were plentiful, as well. Many slaves running for freedom along the land route through eastern Maryland, into Delaware and north into Pennsylvania or east and north into New Jersey, lacked adequate clothing and shoes. Spiny sweet gum burrs, thorny thickets, sharp needles of marsh grass, and icy paths in the winter all took their toll on the feet and limbs of struggling runaways. The Eastern Shore’s numerous rivers, streams and wetlands presented a serious hindrance, particularly to runaways who could not swim. Wet

clothing could draw unwanted attention, and cold weather could seriously debilitate drenched and hungry escapees. Sometimes, in the most severe wet weather, the coarse clothing made of flax or other rough material worn by slaves chafed against their skin, causing it to bleed, filling every step toward freedom with pain.⁶⁶

William Still and Thomas Garrett, friends of Tubman and active agents on the Underground Railroad in Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware, respectively, and, often reported the weakened conditions of the runaways who appeared on their doorsteps. They frequently had to provide clothing and shoes; typical slave garments had to be replaced as quickly as possible, as this was one of the most obvious means of detection. Medical care, including wound dressing, medicine, and food and water revived dangerously weak and ill runaways. Occasionally, fugitive slaves died under the care of Underground Railroad operators in the North. In 1857, in spite of their efforts to save him, William Still and Thomas Garret feared for the life of Romulus Hall, whose frostbitten feet turned gangrenous and killed him within a short time of reaching Philadelphia.⁶⁷ The Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society sought donations on several occasions to pay the funeral expenses for fugitives who died while in Rochester, N.Y.⁶⁸

Other runaways who tried to secret themselves aboard boats faced suffocating journeys deep in the holds of ships, often in airless hidden compartments. They had to fend off wharf rats that had stolen aboard as well in search of food. Southern port authorities often “smoked” the holds of ships before they were allowed to leave for Northern ports: the smoking forced out or suffocated both rats and stowaways.⁶⁹ Trains provided rapid transit out of slave territory, but a fugitive needed a certificate of freedom, seaman’s protection papers like those used by Frederick Douglass in his escape from

Baltimore, or some other means to deflect questions from railroad agents and suspicious white travelers. Secretly hitching a ride on a train was hazardous as well; trains heading out of slave states were often searched for runaways. Johnson H. Walker, a runaway from Maryland, lost his foot when the train he was attempting to board at Wilmington, Delaware, ran over him after he lost his balance and slipped beneath its wheels.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, these barriers and unforeseen events did not stop many runaways. Most were healthy enough to continue moving north, eventually finding their way to Canada or some northern city or town where they found employment and freedom, though tenuous as it was with the Fugitive Slave Act still making life for them a precarious situation.

And so it was with Tubman. Surmounting great obstacles, she continued her campaign for liberation of her family. Though she had been successful in helping her youngest brother, Moses, to run away in 1850, she failed in two trips between 1852 and early 1854, to bring the rest of her family North. But her success rate would improve as the decade wore on. By taking those first steps to freedom in 1849, Tubman did not anticipate how her original lone act of survival would multiply into many more steps to freedom, changing the landscape of a community so completely for generations to come. While Tubman was not responsible for all the slaves who would run away from Dorchester and its surrounding counties in the 1850s, it would be her inspiration that would propel many to do so.

CHAPTER FIVE NOTES

¹ Robert Hayden, "Runagate Runagate," in The Norton Anthology of African American Literature, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997).

² Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). 16-17. There may be several reasons for the understatement of fugitives. Many slaveholders expected to find their runaway slaves, or that the slaves would return of their own volition. Also, many slaveholders knew that any indication that slaves were not happy was an indictment of the system of slavery itself and reflected badly on the slaveholders' own contention that slavery was a benevolent and beneficial system for the slaves themselves.

³ *Cambridge Chronicle*, Cambridge, MD. January 2, 1847, 3

⁴ *Cambridge Chronicle*, September 4, 1847, 2.

⁵ "Runaways," *Easton Star*, Easton, MD, August 14, 1849.

⁶ "A Stampede," *Easton Star*, Easton, MD, October 24, 1849.

⁷ "Cost of Trial," *Baltimore Sun*, Baltimore, MD, December 7, 1849.

⁸ There is a significant historiography on the Underground Railroad (URR), though much of it reflects the many myths and mysteries perpetuated over the past one hundred and fifty years. Oral traditions have dominated the history of the URR, particularly those of white Quakers and other white participants (real and imagined) in the system. Black participation has, until fairly recently, been mostly ignored. There are several reasons for this: many white participants viewed their participation as heroic and worthy of public commendation, while many black participants viewed it as a community obligation. Many URR operatives in the slave states were free blacks and slaves, thereby precluding any acknowledgement of their participation before the Civil War, and even after – the fear of reprisals was great (the same could be said of southern white agents, too). Black participation in the north was rarely documented – in a racist and white-dominated world, blacks rarely had the opportunity to tell their histories or record them for the general public. There are exceptions. One in particular highly important and classic volume, The Underground Railroad (1872) by William Still, who documented not only his own important role in Philadelphia's URR network, but also many other black agents' roles in the functioning and success of its operations. Numerous escape narratives speak of those nameless black people who helped their freedom-bound brothers and sisters north, including those by Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Harriet Jacobs, William Wells Brown, William and Ellen Craft, and others like them. R.C. Smedley wrote extensively on the URR network in Chester and its border counties in Pennsylvania in The History of

The Underground Railroad in Chester and Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania (1883). Focusing primarily on the white participants, Smedley ignored some of the important black partners active on this route to freedom. In 1898, Wilbur Siebert, a professor of history at Ohio State University, and later at Harvard, wrote his classic contribution to the historiography of the Underground Railroad in The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom. Siebert interviewed and corresponded with many aging abolitionists and URR operators, and members of their families, and conducted extensive research into the operations of the system throughout the country. Though Siebert did uncover and acknowledge the participation of blacks as operatives in the network to freedom, their numbers pale in comparison to the legions of white people he identified. Siebert also mis-identifies some black individuals as white. Throughout this whole period, post-emancipation through the turn of the twentieth century, aging abolitionists wrote their memoirs and reminiscences, documenting their own roles in the anti-slavery movement and the URR, often obscuring the contributions of their black co-workers. Larry Gara, in his work, The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad (1961), questioned the Quaker-and white-abolitionist-dominated histories, arguing that slaves themselves were far more responsible for taking their own liberty successfully, they often depended on white help after they reached the north. Gara argued that not all abolitionists were interested in helping freedom seekers, and that runaways were often left to their own devices to secure shelter and food even after they made their way to a free state. He credited black communities in the north with helping runaway slaves to a far greater degree than any other scholarship on the URR, but his sweeping dismissal of the numbers of runaways claimed to have fled to freedom on the URR, as well he dismissed the idea that the URR was organized and efficient, that the reminiscences of abolitionists were faulty and not reliable, overshadowed his other contributions to the study of the URR. In 1977, James A. McGowan wrote about the life of white Quaker abolitionist Thomas Garrett in Station Master on the Underground Railroad: The Life and Letters of Thomas Garrett, highlighting the important role Thomas Garrett played on the URR. McGowan reveals that, in spite of his own reservations about Garrett's claims to have assisted 2700 slaves over a forty-year period, the documentary evidence supports Garrett's place in the pantheon of great URR operators. Garrett could not have been such a successful URR operator without the organizational and financial support from the region's vast URR network, which included many nameless agents, black and white. Benjamin Quarles's work, Black Abolitionists (1969) expanded the scholarship on black participation, not only as URR operators but also as anti-slavery activists, founders of numerous black political, humanitarian, educational, and economic organizations and institutions vital to the survival of black communities and their sheltered runaways. Charles Blockson's contributions to the study of the URR have challenged the dominant white-centered model and have expanded our knowledge of the multitudes of forgotten narratives of runaway slaves and free black helpers who populated the URR, from Louisiana to Canada (see, Charles L. Blockson, The Underground Railroad: Dramatic Firsthand Accounts of Daring Escapes to Freedom. (New York: Berkley Books, 1987). Many regional studies are being conducted by scholars and local researchers who are methodically piecing together URR stories, separating fact from fiction and discovering previously hidden and obscured histories of important participants on the road to

freedom. Judith Wellman has done extensive work on the URR in Central New York; Milton Sernett's new book, North Star Country, also focuses on the extensive abolitionist and URR networks in this region, highlighting the important synergies of an unusual group of whites and blacks working to end slavery and help runaway slaves find safety and security in New York and Canada. Kathryn Grover's study of New Bedford, Massachusetts' fugitive slave and abolitionist community also highlights many of the region's heretofore lost and obscured histories in The Fugitive's Gibraltar. Escaping Slaves and Abolitionism in New Bedford, Massachusetts. One of the most recent and important regional studies, Just Over the Line: Chester County and the Underground Railroad (2002), by William Kashatus, covers much of the URR route activity and activists with whom Harriet Tubman was most intimately involved in Pennsylvania. The opening of the Underground Railroad Museum in Cincinnati, Ohio in 2004 will certainly spawn more detailed and continuing research on the operations of the URR.

⁹ John Hope Franklin, Loren Schweninger, Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). 149-181.

¹⁰ Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 20.

¹¹ Bradford, Scenes. 20-22; see also Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney, "Moses," *Freedmen's Record*, March 1865. 35.

¹² "The Underground Railroad: Manuscript Materials Collected by Professor Seibert, Ohio University." Vol. 40. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA.. Although Seibert indicated that Harriet referred to Tom as her "cousin," Tom was in fact John Tubman's brother, and thus was Harriet's brother-in-law.

¹³ Louis Diggs, Baltimore City Directories, 1835-1860.

¹⁴ "Mills Deposition." Equity Papers 249. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.

¹⁵ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Reel 1, Box 3 folder d2. NYPL - Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. New York.. Letter, "Harkless Bowley to Earl Conrad, August 8, 1939,"

¹⁶ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Letter, "Harkless Bowley to Earl Conrad, August 8, 1939." See also, "Equity Papers 394." Dorchester County Circuit Court. MDSA. Annapolis, MD. A log canoe was a common sailboat on the Chesapeake. It was generally constructed of three to five hollowed out logs strapped together and fitted with a sail and a keel. Special thanks to Frank Newton, skipjack of the *Nathan of Dorchester*, and Harold Ruark, master ship modeler of Dorchester County, for explaining this type of vessel, and its importance to travel throughout the Chesapeake.

¹⁷ Earl Conrad, Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Microfilm, 2 reels vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: The New York Public Library. Letter, "Harkless Bowley to Earl Conrad, August 8, 1939." See also, Franklin Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, July 17, 1863. "In December, 1850, she had visited Baltimore and brought away her sister and two children, who had come up from Cambridge, in a boat, under the charge of her sister's husband, a free black." Sanborn was confused as to the exact relationship between Harriet and Kessiah, which was complicated by Harriet and Kessiah calling each other "sister." James A. Bowley, however, wrote in a letter written sometime in 1868, that he was one of Tubman's "first passengers from the house of bondage." "Letter, James A. Bowley to "Aunt" [Harriet Tubman]." Harriet Tubman Collection. Harriet Tubman Home Museum. Auburn, N.Y.

¹⁸ Emma P. Telford. "Harriet: The Modern Moses of Heroism and Visions," Cayuga County Museum, Auburn, NY: circa 1905.

¹⁹ Cheney, "Moses." 35

²⁰ Cheney, "Moses." 35

²¹ Cheney, "Moses." 35

²² Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." ; and Bradford, Scenes. 77.

²³ Linda R. Monk, The Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution. (New York: Hyperion, 2003); C. Peter Ripley, ed., The Black Abolitionist Papers, Vols. 1-5 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Vol. IV.

²⁴ In 1851, in Christiana, PA, a slave owner and his son from Maryland, attempted to retrieve one of their runaway slaves. Black and white neighbors rose up and rioted, killing the father and wounding the son. Though some forty individuals were indicted for obstruction of federal law under the fugitive Slave Act's terms, they were all acquitted. See also Ripley, ed., Black Abolitionist Papers. Vol. IV, for information on various fugitive slave cases and rescues, including the Christiana Riot.

²⁵ Ripley, ed., Black Abolitionist Papers. Vol. II, 9-10.

²⁶ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." It is not clear which brother this was. It could have been Moses, which would mean the earlier rescue in 1850 was of a different "brother." It is most likely that one of these two brothers is actually not a blood brother but rather a fictive kin brother or some other male relative she referred to as her brother. Or Sanborn could have simply been confused. We do know however, that Moses ran away shortly after Tubman did, and that her other known brothers, Robert, Ben and Henry, ran away at Christmas time 1854. See "Deposition." Chancery Papers 249. Dorchester County Court, Dorchester County Court House. Cambridge, MD.

²⁷ By the fall of 1851 Tubman had brought away Kessiah, James, and Araminta Bowley, her brother Moses and two unidentified men, and an unidentified number when she returned to Dorchester County for the first time in the fall of 1851. These individuals, taken collectively, and including Kessiah's husband, John, could have been the eleven fugitives Tubman brought to Canada in December. This "brother" and his wife Sanborn mentions is not identified – he may be a fictive brother, or a half brother, or some other relative. Or, Sanborn could simply be mistaken. See Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." and, Bradford, Scenes. 77.

²⁸ Frederick Douglass, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass. (1882; Reprint, 2001). Scituate, MA: Digital Scanning, Inc., 2001). 329-330.

²⁹ Frederick Douglass, Benjamin Quarles, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself. (1845; Reprint, 6th). Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1971). 101-102

³⁰ Douglass, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass.

³¹ Douglass, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass. 330. For detailed accounts of the the operations of the Underground Railroad in New York, see: Milton Sernett, North Star Country. Upstate New York and the Crusade for African American Freedom. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

³² "The Underground Railroad: Manuscript Materials Collected by Professor Seibert, Ohio University." Vol. 40. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA.

³³ "Tubman Interview [Seibert]."

³⁴ Douglass is known to have written specifically about Tubman only once. In a letter to Tubman, written at the request of Sarah Bradford for her first biography of Tubman in 1868, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman, Douglass praised Tubman's many virtues and courageous acts. In one other surviving letter, Douglass mentions Tubman, but refers to her as a "colored woman, who escaped from slavery eight years ago, has made several returns at great risk, and has brought out, since obtaining her freedom, fifty others from the house of bondage. She has been spending a short time with us since the holidays." Letter to the Irish Ladies Anti-Slavery Association, January 8, 1858. Philip S. Foner, ed., Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999). 600-601.

³⁵ Douglass, Narrative. 57. This was in 1834. See Dickson J. Preston, Young Frederick Douglass. The Maryland Years. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

³⁶ Douglass, Narrative. 77. This was in 1835-1836. See also Preston, Young Frederick.

³⁷ Douglass, Narrative.

³⁸ See this exchange reprinted in Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, (1855; reprint, New York: New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969.) See also, Frederick Douglass, "Falsehood Refuted," *The North Star*, Rochester, N.Y., Oct. 13, 1848. Douglass reminded Thompson of the days they passed each other on the road near their homes at Bayside in Talbot County, "You remember when I used to meet you on the road to St. Michael's or near Mr. Covey's lane gate, I hardly dared lift my head, and look up at you. If I should meet you now... you would see a great change in me!" The exchange of letters first started with A.C.C. Thompson's letter to the *Delaware Republican*, 1845, which was reprinted in the *Liberator*, December 12, 1845, followed by a response by Douglass on February 20, 1846, and February 27, 1846; see also the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, November 25, 1845; and the *Albany Patriot*, December 31, 1845, January 1846. See also, Preston, Young Frederick. 170-172; and, Patricia J. Ferreira, "Frederick Douglass in Ireland: The Dublin Edition of His *Narrative*," *New Hibernia Review* 5.1 2001, (2001): In a very strange twist of fate, A.C.C. Thompson also ended up in New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1841, where Frederick Douglass moved when he escaped slavery in 1838. Fortunately Douglass had left the area earlier that summer, or they could have happened upon each other on the docks in New Bedford's busy waterfront. In early October, 1841, twenty year old A.C.C. Thompson went to Baltimore with the express purpose of transacting some business for his father, Dr. Absalom Thompson. But, A.C.C. absconded with the five hundred dollars his father had entrusted to him, and making his way to New Bedford, where on November 11, he sailed out of Fair Haven on the whale ship Cadmus. Seeking adventure, Thompson got plenty when the ship foundered in the South Pacific, leaving the crew stranded on Tahiti for months. Dr. Absalom Thompson, however, had no idea what had become of his son, and he died one year later not knowing if his son was dead or alive. (See "A Mysterious Disappearance," *Delaware Republican*, Wilmington, DE, October 8, 1841. I am indebted to Pat Lewis for bringing this article to my attention.) A.C.C. returned home in early 1843, many months after his father died. See Dickson J. Preston, "The Tale of Absalom Christopher Columbus Americus Vespucious Thompson," *The Banner*, Cambridge, MD, August 28, 1978.; and A.C.C. Thompson, "The Log of a Talbot Seaman. Being a True Account of the Whaling Voyage and Shipwreck of the Author, Absalom Thompson, Born and Raised at "Mary's Delight" in Bay Side., " *Star Democrat*, Easton, MD, April 3, 10, 17, 24, and May 1, 1915.

³⁹ See newspaper exchange in – cite here – . Thompsons support of Auld is quite weak in comparison to the other slaveholders who write in defending the characters of Auld, Covey, and others Douglass accuses of cruelty in his Narrative. In Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Douglass's later autobiography, he struggles with a more moderate view of the Auld's treatment of him. See Douglass, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass. William McFeely argues that Douglass's and Auld's relationship was far more complex than either of them acknowledged. See William S. McFeeley, Frederick Douglass. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991). 294-295.

⁴⁰ There are other links between the lives of these two famous former slaves from Dorchester County. Later, when Tubman helped her brothers and others run away in 1854, two of the man took aliases that coincidently figure into the lives of Douglass's and these men. One runaway slave, John Chase, took the name Daniel Lloyd; the white man, Daniel Lloyd was the son of Edward Lloyd of Talbot county, and as young boys, Douglass was Daniel's playmate who Douglass would later remember fondly. Douglass credited Lloyd with teaching him "good diction" in addition to sharing food and protecting him from bullies on the plantation, and kept him informed of the activities in the big house. See Preston, *Young Frederick*. Another member of Tubman's party in 1854 was Peter Jackson, who took the alias Tench Tilghman, the name of a prominent and powerful land and slave owner in Talbot county. Although these slaves lived in Dorchester County, they chose names of prominent white men in the neighboring county, indicating a string familiarity and relationship with people and places there.

⁴¹ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."

⁴² Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."

⁴³ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." The identities of these freedom seekers is not yet known.

⁴⁴ "Progress in Maryland," *The National Era*, Washington, D.C., August 12, 1852; C. Christopher Brown, "Maryland's First Political Convention by and for Its Colored People," *Maryland Historical Society Magazine* 88, no. 3 Fall, (1993):

⁴⁵ Announcements were made weekly in the Dorchester County newspapers for months for individuals to come forward with copies of their legal documents so they could re-inscribed into courthouse files. "\$1000 REWARD, BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR DORCHESTER COUNTY. ...will pay one thousand dollars reward to any individual or individuals, who may give information as may lead to the apprehension and conviction of the Incendiary or Incendiaries, who fired the court House on the 9th inst." "\$1000 Reward," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Cambridge, MD, May 22, 1852. 4.

⁴⁶ Dorchester County Orphans Court Records. "T.H.H. 1," Register of Wills, Cambridge, MD: May 12.

⁴⁷ "Equity Papers 249." Dorchester County Circuit Court. Box 57. Loc. OR/8/12/2, MDSA. Annapolis, MD.

⁴⁸ The bulk of this material forms another part of the crucial documentation relating to Harriet Tubman's family; Equity Papers 249, of the Chancery Court of Dorchester County, and a subsequent complaint filed by Eliza Brodess against her co-administrator, John Mills, Equity Papers 394, form the foundation of much of what is now known about Harriet Tubman and her family and the white families who claimed ownership of them.

⁴⁹ Stewart paid Willis \$312.50 for Harriet. See "James A. Stewart from Thomas Willis." Chattel Records. Liber FJH, No. 2, p. 11. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.. When Stewart bought Harriet, he already held over forty slaves, half were women. Harriet was twenty years old at the time. See "Assessors Field Book." Dorchester County Board of County Commissioners. C688. 1-5-2-12, MDSA. Annapolis. 26-27. Harriet's fate is unknown. Stewart sent the majority of his slaves to labor on his plantations in Texas in 1855, including two of the three Harriets he enslaved at the time, but it is not clear if this Harriet was one of them. Willis, however, kept the two little girls, Mary and Sarah, although who cared for them in his household is a mystery, as he had no other slaves. See "Field Book 1852." 165. In 1860, Willis sold Mary.

⁵⁰ John Brown was a grandson of Elizabeth Pattison and Aschah was Elizabeth's daughter, which accounts for the different amounts Stewart paid for their respective interests in Rit. "James A. Stewart from John Brown." Chattel Records. Liber FJH, No. 2, pp. 25-26. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.; and, "James A. Stewart from Aschah Pattison." Chattel Records. Liber FJH, No. 2, pp. 55. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.

⁵¹ Interestingly, Eliza Brodess did not claim Rit as her slave in the 1852 tax assessment record. This may be because she believed Rit was entitled to her freedom, or she had already sold Rit to Ben – though that record was not recorded until 1855. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

⁵² James Freeman Clark, Anti-Slavery Days New York; J. W. Lovell Company, 1883 ed. (Westport, Connecticut: rpt., Negro Universities Press, 1970). 81.

⁵³ For a list of the runaways who escaped with Tubman, see Kate Clifford Larson, Bound For the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Heroine. (New York: Ballantine Books, forthcoming December 2003.)

⁵⁴ Cheney, "Moses." 35-36.

⁵⁵ Julius Sherrard Scott, III, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution." (Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University., 1986). 24-25. See also, Franklin, Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation.

⁵⁶ Cheney, "Moses." Cheney says that Tubman chose a meeting place "eight or ten miles distant." Cheney does not indicate from where; whether she was referring to the Brodess plantation, one of the Thompson properties, or a variety of other places is not known. Nevertheless, Cheney did write that Tubman did not return to the plantation herself. 36

⁵⁷ Joseph D. and Marsha McCabe Thomas, ed., Spinner: People and Culture in Southeastern Massachusetts. Vol. IV (New Bedford, MA: Spinner Publications, Inc., 1988). 66-67.

⁵⁸ Cheney, "Moses." 36

⁵⁹ Clark, Anti-Slavery Days. 81

⁶⁰ Thomas, ed., People, Vol. IV. P. 67. Henry Carrol is not listed in Still's book or Journal C. This may be an alias, thereby making it difficult to identify whom this man is. The Carrol name is one of the most prominent white names on the Eastern Shore, including that of Thomas King Carroll of Dorchester County and a former Governor of Maryland.

⁶¹ Bradford, Scenes. 25.

⁶² Emily Howland, "Diary October 4, 1873." Florence W. Hazzard Papers. Collection # 2516-2. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University. Ithaca, NY.

⁶³ "Howland Oct. 4, 1873." While Tubman is not quoted by Howland as saying the bridge was in Delaware, this is the most likely place. In fact, Thomas Garrett wrote in a letter that there had been rumors of trouble in the form of harassment of blacks in Wilmington by gangs of Irish men. Tubman was rightfully frightened; the animosity between blacks and Irish workers was already well established by the 1850s in most cities where large numbers of Irish had settled. Competition over jobs created many tense confrontations and bad feelings on both sides; however, Irish laborers, though discriminated against by native-born whites as well, felt some superiority to blacks. It did not take long for European immigrants to acculturate the anti-black and racist attitudes of native born Americans. See also, Iver Bernstein, The New York City Draft Riots. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); David R. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class. (New York: Verso, 1991).

⁶⁴ Cheney, "Moses." 36.

⁶⁵ Cheney, "Moses." 36.

⁶⁶ "New York." The Underground Railroad: Manuscript materials collected by Professor Siebert. US 5278.36.25. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA.. "When Men Were Sold. The Underground Railroad in Bucks County." *The Bucks County Intelligencer*, March 31, 1898.

⁶⁷ William Still, The Underground Railroad. (1871; Reprint, Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1970). Pp. 34-38. See also, "Letter, Thomas Garrett to Mary Edmondson, March 29, 1857," in James McGowan, Station Master on the Underground Railroad. (Moylan, PA: The Whimsie Press, 1977). 139-143; and "Thomas Garrett to William Still, March 28, 1857," McGowan, Station Master. 96.

⁶⁸ Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society Records. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor, MI.. *Account Book*, 2:20.

⁶⁹ There is a growing body of literature on runaway slaves in addition to work on the Underground Railroad. See Gerald W. Mullin, Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth Century Virginia. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).; and Franklin, Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation.

⁷⁰ "Massachusetts." The Underground Railroad: Manuscript materials collected by Professor Siebert. US 5278.36.25. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. *Vigilance Committee of Boston Account Book*, July 19, 1858, p. 53.

CHAPTER VI

ALL FOR THE LOVE OF FAMILY

With their sister ensconced in Philadelphia and planning for their eventual freedom, Ben, Robert and Henry Ross were making their own plans. Between 1851 to 1853, Tubman's brothers attempted several times to flee the Eastern Shore. It is a wonder that Eliza Brodess retained ownership of them throughout this period. "We started to come away," Tubman's brother, Henry, told an interviewer in 1863, "but got surrounded," so they turned back.¹ A white man, who was a "friend," offered to buy them, but Eliza Brodess refused, telling him, "I'd rather see them sold to Georgia."² The unknown white buyer, rebuffed by Brodess's refusal to sell them to him, told the brothers to run away.³ They tried to run away again, this time staying away for "six or eight months," but were still unable to ever leave the Eastern Shore. Advertisements were posted for their capture, making it difficult for them to leave their hiding place. Ben Ross tried to help his sons; he sent them to a man "who said he could carry us away... but he disappointed us."⁴ Once again they had to turn back, vowing they would try again. The brothers' attempts to flee and hide until they could safely complete their journey north must have frustrated and worried Brodess. Better to sell them than to risk losing everything if they were to be successful in taking their own liberty. But the Pattison lawsuit was probably working to the brothers' advantage. Brodess may have been restrained from selling any more of Rit's children or grandchildren, buying time for Robert, Ben and Henry.

This gave Harriet additional opportunities to effect their escape; she tried at least once in the spring of 1854 but failed.⁵ She did, however, successfully bring away Winnibar Johnson, the slave of Samuel Harrington of Tobacco Stick, in early June.⁶ Johnson passed through William Still's office on June 29th, where Still noted that Johnson had been "brought away by his sister Harriet two weeks ago."⁷ Johnson had been staying with Luke Goines, a member of the Vigilance Committee in Philadelphia. Apparently it was too dangerous for Johnson to remain in Philadelphia and he was passed on to New England.⁸

Before Tubman left the Eastern Shore with Johnson, she relayed valuable information to Sam Green Jr., giving him detailed instructions to guide him on his secret journey to Philadelphia. Sam was the enslaved son of Rev. Samuel Green, and possibly a relative of Tubman's mother Rit. Trained as a blacksmith, Sam, Jr. was held in bondage by Dr. James Muse, who Green described as cruel and violent, "the worst man" in Maryland. Literate, possibly through his father's efforts, Green lived at Indian Creek in Dorchester County, not too far from his parents, Sam, Sr., and Catherine, who were both free.⁹ Perhaps hoping to run away with Tubman that June, it took several months of waiting before he could effect his escape; on August 28, though, Green arrived in William Still's office in Philadelphia. Still sent him on to the home of Charles Bustill, a member of one of the most important black Underground Railroad families in the region, who then passed him through to Canada.¹⁰ A few months later Green wrote to his father, reassuring him that he had found not only a safe and easy passage to Canada but that he had seen Harriet in Philadelphia.¹¹

Tubman continued to live and work in Philadelphia throughout 1853 and 1854, saving her money and making friends and valuable connections within Philadelphia's active and multi-racial anti-slavery community. Tubman had pressing responsibilities in Philadelphia, and could not continuously return to Maryland to bring away the rest of her family. Her young nephew, James A. Bowley, the son of Kessiah and John, had remained in Philadelphia under the Harriet's care after his parents moved on to Canada in 1851. Tubman was eager that James receive a good education; schools for black children in Canada were few, and, because he was a child, he may have been less noticeable to roving slave catchers and bounty hunters on the watch for their next victim in Philadelphia's black community. Illiterate herself, Tubman knew the value of an education, and she was determined that her nephew would acquire one. James recalled that Tubman was "compelled to work at service for one dollar a week," giving one half of that for his support, until he eventually moved on to Canada to be with his parents.¹²

So Harriet had to keep working in order to support herself and James and to earn enough money to fund other expeditions to Dorchester County.¹³ Fortunately, Tubman was becoming known to a small group of powerful Northern abolitionists.¹⁴ Marveling at her devotion to freeing her family and friends, these abolitionists were, at times, overwhelmed by the force of her personality. Lucretia Coffin Mott, a Quaker then living outside of Philadelphia, was among the earliest of these white supporters to provide for Tubman's financial and physical needs. Lucretia "stood by them when there was no one else."¹⁵ Through Mott and William Still, Tubman gained access to other prominent white and black anti-slavery activists and Underground Railroad operators in the greater Philadelphia community, including Isaac and Dinah Mendenhall, Allen and Maria

Agnew, and John and Hannah Cox, from the Longwood and Kennet Square community.¹⁶ Lucretia Coffin Mott was an early abolitionist; a member of the radical Hicksite Quaker sect, Mott was a prominent and persistent supporter of the abolition and full citizenship rights for women, including the right to vote and own property. Lucretia Mott, her sister Martha Coffin Wright of Auburn, New York, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Frederick Douglass were part of the small group of reformers who organized and conducted the first Women's Right's Convention, held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. Mott was also a close friend and ally of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison of Boston. For Garrisonians, as they were then called, commitment to liberty and equality extended to rights for women, rights they believed inherently belonged to all people. The experiences of the mid to late 1830's had taught the Garrisonians "that free speech and slavery could not coexist for long in any society... and the spirit that would cut off free speech was the spirit of slavery."¹⁷ Though committed to non-violent forms of protest, they were often subjected to violent and dangerous confrontations with angry protesters who picketed and disrupted their public meetings.

Based on classical republican ideology, abolitionists perceived a stable society that must be rooted in an active citizenry that placed the common good ahead of private gain. Abolitionists argued that the family was man's best hope to fight the moral delinquency inherent in the world around them. Home and family represented goodness, a place where mothers and fathers imparted moral influences on their children. For abolitionists, slavery presented a particularly egregious moral, physical and spiritual dilemma. Slavery assaulted the slave family through selling of family members away from one another, it also promoted physical assaults on female slaves by their white masters, thus corrupting

the slave owner and his family, as well. The potential depravity of the human mind and body led many women abolitionists to argue that the unlimited power of one man over another was morally and spiritually unacceptable, that it led to sin, both physical and moral.¹⁸

Women's participation in anti-slavery work began early. But in the 1830s, pro-slavery sentiment still ran strong even in northern non-slave states, and women's participation in political discourse challenged many citizens' understanding of 19th century gender conventions. Women's attempts to join the political and very public discourse on anti-slavery marked a turning point in abolitionist campaigning; their challenge to strict codes of gender behavior was the beginning of a new tactical program that would eventually transform the political process.

According to Margaret Kellow, prominent white antislavery feminists Lydia Maria Child, Lucretia Mott, Angelina and Sarah Grimke, and Abbey Kelly, among others "brought the enslaved black women to the attention of northern society... [justifying] their public activism by claiming to speak for their sisters in bondage."²⁰ These women "found in American slavery an arresting metaphor for the condition of American women, and they did not hesitate to exploit its strategic impulse."²¹ Some abolitionists, however, though supportive of women's expression of equality, shied away from including demands for women's rights on the anti-slavery platform. Many free black women organized or joined anti-slavery societies, some of which had a mixed racial membership, though racism prevailed in these societies as well. Black women ultimately found it most practical to focus on the needs of their immediate community, and to provide for the growing numbers of runaway slaves seeking protection and aid. Indeed, the arguments of

white women, which at times centered so much on gender oppression, were too narrowly focused for many black women whose work on racial, economic and educational improvement, and aid to freed slaves demanded their immediate attention. Many black and white abolitionists did, however, recognize the gulf between rhetoric and reality, and that racial and sexual inequality were both symptoms of subordination to white men. While the image of the oppressed slave was used to define the nature of the oppression of women, the image of the chained slave woman was a victim of a double oppression; race and gender.

By aligning herself with Mott and the Garrisonian abolitionists, then, Tubman became politicized very early on, attending anti-slavery meetings and then women's rights meetings and black rights conventions throughout the latter part of the 1850s. It was not long before Tubman found herself challenging women's and African American's inferior political, economic and social roles. This trustworthy network of active reformers proved worthy in Tubman's eyes; they often risked their own lives and livelihoods to defend and protect runaway slaves. Among them she found respect and the financial and personal support she needed to pursue her private war against slavery on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The ideologies of racial and gender equality, which Tubman incorporated into her life during the 1850s, became central to her activism for the remainder of her life.

Many free black women engaged in antislavery work and racial uplift, while fewer white women felt the need to do so. African Americans fought and struggled for freedom and economic and educational improvement. Fundraising, propaganda campaigns, boycotts and other community and church based programs dominated most black

women's activities. It was often the responsibility, as well, of black women to provide for the material needs of recently freed slaves living in their communities, particularly before the fugitive slave act of 1850. After that time, much of their fundraising went to providing resources to move the freedmen and women to Canada and England. Lucretia Mott, on at least one occasion, spoke to the problem of stretched financial resources. According to historian Shirley Yee, Mott argued that aiding fugitive slaves was "not properly Anti-Slavery work," because, the "primary goal of the society was to eliminate slavery" and to "destroy the system, root and branch, to lay the axe at the root of the corrupt tree."²³ Many others disagreed, and despaired of the movement's limited agenda when there was still so much work to be done once the slave was free. On the other hand, Lucretia Mott did not practice what she preached; she was a devoted friend and supporter to Tubman, and her home was a stop on the Underground Railroad. She may have recognized that with limited resources, the movement's primary goal should be the total elimination of slavery immediately, so there would be no need to support a system to help slaves run away. Black women activists were less divisive on this issue. They had to confront directly the continuing realities of slavery. Nor, as arbiters of moral, educational, and spiritual well being, could black women turn their backs on the destitute and poor, particularly recently freed bondsmen and women.

It was within this bifurcated world that Tubman maneuvered. She was dependent upon white benefactors like Mott to provide funding to support, not only her trips South, but also for the security and settlement of fugitive slaves. But Tubman was also devoted to humanitarian work in the black community, through black churches, benevolent organizations and aid societies, which were often ignored by white activists.

In December 1854, after saving more of her own money and soliciting funds from anti-slavery activists like William Still, Lucretia Mott and Mott's husband James, among others, Tubman made another attempt to retrieve her brothers. Harriet learned that Eliza Brodess was planning to sell her brothers over the Christmas holiday. Tubman enlisted the help of a literate friend in Philadelphia, who wrote a letter to Jacob Jackson, a free black then living in Dorchester County.²⁴ Jackson was unusual; he could read and write, which was not common for a black person in Dorchester County. Jackson was probably a leader of some sort in the black community; it appears that he took in and adopted orphaned black children into his family, a practice he continued for over twenty years. Though his exact relationship to Tubman and her family is unknown, as a literate free black, Jackson may have been a hub of communication in the community, writing and reading letters for those who could not read and write for themselves. Regardless of the relationship, Tubman was extremely cautious not to reveal anything in the letter that might pique the interest of a suspicious white postmaster. She first wrote of "indifferent matters," then asked, "read my letter to the old folks, and give my love to them, and tell my brothers to be always *watching unto prayer*, and when the *good old ship of Zion comes along, to be ready to step aboard*."²⁵ The letter was signed, "William Henry Jackson," the name of Jacob's adopted son who had left Dorchester County for the north some years before. Tubman and Jacob must have established a specific code at some point during the years prior to 1854, and their caution proved wise; the postal authorities became suspicious because there had been several escapes in the area and Jackson was suspected of providing a helping hand. Sarah Bradford later wrote,

Jacob was not allowed to have his letters till the self-elected inspectors had had the reading of them, and studied into their secret meaning. They, therefore, got

together, wiped their glasses, and got them on, and proceeded to a careful perusal of this mysterious document. What it meant, they could not imagine; William Henry Jackson had no parents or brothers, and the letter was incomprehensible. White genius having exhausted itself, black genius was called in, and Jacob's letter was at last handed to him. Jacob saw at once what it meant, but tossed it down, saying, "Dat letter can't be meant for me, no how. I can't make head nor tail of it," and walked off and took immediate measures to let Harriet's brothers know secretly that she was coming, and they must be ready to start at a moment's notice for the North.²⁶

How often Tubman communicated with Jackson to spread news and convey

important instructions and information is not known; nevertheless, Jackson knew what the message meant, and delivered it to Tubman's brothers. Harriet made her way back down to the Eastern Shore, probably by train to Baltimore, and then by boat to Cambridge, or some other convenient landing along the Choptank. She arrived Christmas Eve day, a Saturday, the perfect timing for an escape. Slaveholders usually allowed some of their slaves, especially field slaves, to take time to visit with relatives and friends on other plantations during the holidays. Ben, Robert, and Henry were expected to visit their parents for Christmas dinner at Poplar Neck. Upon Harriet's arrival, however, she discovered advertisements had been posted for a public auction to be held on Monday, the day after Christmas, when her three brothers would be sold to the highest bidder. With no time to waste, Robert, Ben and Henry were alerted to her presence; they were to meet after dark and start immediately for "their father's cabin, forty miles away."²⁷ Unbeknown to Tubman, though, Robert's wife, Mary, was in labor, about to give birth to their third child.

The baby was coming, and Mary needed a midwife. Robert, torn between freedom in the North and his devotion to his wife and his unborn child, hesitated, raising Mary's suspicions. She was not aware of his plans, though she lived with the possibility that he would try to flee to freedom again after his past attempts ended in failure. Within a

couple of hours, “another little inheritor of the blessings of slavery” was born, and they named her Harriet.²⁸ Robert then turned his thoughts to joining his sister and brothers again. It was so late, and he knew he must go, but Mary kept calling for him, sensing there was something wrong. Robert agonized over the deceit he was about to commit; he was leaving his wife, his two little boys John and Moses, and now his infant daughter. He could not be sure of their fate, but he knew that staying behind meant certain sale for him to the Deep South. So, he lied to Mary, claiming he was going to hire himself out for Christmas day. Mary did not believe the rumors that he was to be sold, and he hoped that this lie would calm her worries. But she soon realized his true intentions, and finally, after pleading with him to stay, she let him go, reminding him never to forget her and the children. With what must have been great distress, Robert left his family behind, and set out to meet his sister and brothers.²⁹

Tubman had not waited for Robert, however; she had specified a time and place, and according to her rules, she “never waited for no one.”³⁰ She gathered those who had arrived on time and set out for Poplar Neck. Ben had arranged for his fiancée, Jane Kane, to join them; she was owned by Horatio Jones, “the worst man in the country.”³¹ Jones, Kane told an interviewer, was a cruel man, who beat, tortured and flogged his slaves.³² He starved them and took away their clothes to keep them from leaving the farm where they labored. He whipped Jane’s brother “until his back was as raw as a piece of beef;” he beat her “until the blood ran from my mouth and my nose,” then locked her in a cupboard where she almost suffocated.³³ Jones would not allow Jane to marry Ben, but she nevertheless waited longingly and hopefully for Ben to take her away so they could get married. On the night of the escape, Jane put on a suit of men’s clothing that Ben had

secreted for her in one of Jones's gardens. When she was discovered missing, the other slaves on the farm did not imagine that the young man walking up from the garden, "as if from the river," was actually Jane. The disguise had worked well, and Jane was soon on her way to Poplar Neck with Ben.³⁴

According to Bradford, the main source for this escape story, Robert, in the meantime, raced directly for Poplar Neck himself, hoping to catch up with the group there and travel on to freedom with them. On Christmas morning he reached Dr. Thompson's property at Poplar Neck. There, in the "fodder house" not far from his parent's cabin, Robert found his sister, his two brothers, Ben and Henry, and Jane and two others: twenty year old John Chase, the slave of John Campbell Henry from Cambridge, and Peter Jackson, the slave of George Winthrop, also a farmer from the Cambridge area.³⁵ It was raining heavily that day, so they remained hidden together in the fodder house to wait for the cover of darkness to run north.³⁶

Rit, meanwhile, was waiting impatiently for her sons to arrive for Christmas dinner. From the "chinks" in the fodder house walls, Harriet and her brothers watched their mother step out of her cabin, "shading her eyes with her hand, take a long look down the road to see if her children were coming, and then they could almost hear her sigh as she turned into the house, disappointed."³⁷ Harriet had not seen her mother for "six years," but she could not risk letting Rit know that her children were hiding but a few yards from her cabin door, lest she cause such an "uproar in her efforts to detain them with her, that the whole plantation would have been alarmed."³⁸ The night before, after arriving at the fodder house, Harriet sent John Chase and Peter Jackson to her father's cabin door to rouse him without letting Rit know what was happening. Ben gathered some food for the

hungry and weary runaways and brought it to the fodder house. Using every caution, he “slipped” the food “inside the door, taking care not to *see* his children.”³⁹ Ben knew that he would be asked if he had seen them when the slave catchers came looking, and he cleverly decided he could tell them that he truly did not “see” them. It was very hard for Ben, though; he had not seen his daughter Harriet since she had run away, and now she was there with her brothers, ready to run north, leaving him and Rit behind, perhaps to see them no more. He checked on the group several times during Christmas day, and by nightfall they were rested and well fed and ready to start their journey. Harriet and her brothers took a moment to peer through the cabin window; there, Rit sat “by her fire with a pipe in her mouth, her head on her hand, rocking back and forth as she did when she was in trouble, and wondering what new evil had come to her children.”⁴⁰ Sadly, they turned their faces north, not knowing if they would ever see their dear mother again. Ben tied a “handkerchief tight over his eyes, and two of his sons taking him by each arm, he accompanied them some miles upon their journey. They then bade him farewell, and left him standing blind-fold in the middle of the road. When he could no longer hear their footsteps, he took off the handkerchief, and turned back.”⁴¹

Tubman’s route north on this particular occasion is not known, but there are two likely possibilities. She could have taken her group east through Federalsburg, then over to the Bridgeville area in Delaware, then north to Camden, Dover, New Castle and Wilmington, stopping at various safe houses along the way in Blackbird, Smyrna and other places. Tubman could have also gone northeast, along the Choptank River, through Denton and Greensboro, through Sandtown and Willow Grove, then on to Dover and Wilmington in Delaware. Once in Wilmington, Tubman and her group stopped at

Thomas Garrett's home where he provided them with food and clothing. Harriet and one of the men "had worn their shoes off their feet," so Garrett gave them two dollars to buy new shoes. Garrett, a hardware and iron merchant used his own income to provide refuge and necessities for the estimated 2500 runaways who came through his home over a thirty-to-forty year period.⁴²

Garrett secured a carriage for Tubman and her party, directing them on to Allen Agnew's house in Kennett, Chester County, Pennsylvania, where Agnew would forward them "across the country to the city," to William Still's Anti-Slavery Office in Philadelphia.⁴³ At Still's, the party felt relieved to have "eluded pursuit."⁴⁴ It was December 29, and they had spent four days traveling over one hundred miles to freedom. William Still had already welcomed six freedom seekers that month into his home or office, but on December 29th, Tubman and her party of nine runaways arrived together. It is possible that the additional two men arriving that very same day knew Tubman and traveled with her group, having met them somewhere in Delaware, and thus made the journey together. George Ross and William Thompson were both owned by Lewis N. Wright, a Delaware farmer from Seaford. Wright's family had extensive land holdings and business relationships to the west in Dorchester County, where the Wrights and families like them traveled back and forth between the two states and counties several times throughout the year. Seaford, just south of Bridgeville, was a major trade terminus at the headwaters of the Nanticoke River and had been settled by many people with familial and economic relationships in Dorchester County.⁴⁵ The Wrights transported their slave labor back and forth across state lines, depending upon the seasonal labor requirements of their various farming and fishing enterprises. George Ross and William

Thompson may have been laboring for Wright in Dorchester County when they ran away, making contact with Tubman even more likely. Also, several of Ross's and Thompson's enslaved friends from Seaford, Delaware had escaped their enslavers earlier that May, following the same route to Wilmington and Philadelphia that Tubman probably used.⁴⁶

William Still was responsible for securing passage from Philadelphia to a variety of safe houses or other "stations" along the Underground Railroad route North. He depended upon a large network of white and black abolitionists throughout the area, predominantly in Philadelphia and neighboring Chester and Lancaster counties and across the Delaware River in New Jersey. He forwarded many of his charges directly on to New York City, New Bedford, Boston, and beyond, as well as central New York cities and town like Troy, Albany, Syracuse, and Rochester, where fugitives were then directed to Buffalo or some other convenient place for safe passage across Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, or Niagara Falls. Some went to Elmira, where John W. Jones, a longtime black Underground Railroad operator whose home funneled hundreds of fugitives making their way through eastern and central Pennsylvania, then on to Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo for transfer to the Suspension Bridge.⁴⁷

William Still kept a record of most of the runaway slaves who sought shelter and aid through his office at the Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia. Still noted each person's name, age, height, skin color, name of their enslaver, and where they had lived, and sometimes the runaway's personal family information such as number of brothers and sisters, parents, spouses and children. He recorded any aliases the runaways chose, ensuring that they could be found by friends and family in the future. He also, on occasion, took testimony from the former slaves, recording their experiences under

slavery, their reasons for taking flight, and their opinions of their masters. Still also maintained detailed accounts of funds spent on each freedom seeker who came through the Society's office.⁴⁸

On December 29, when Tubman and her brothers came through Still's office, he sat down and interviewed each of them. Here, Still recorded the names Harriet's brothers would take, and keep, for the rest of their lives. Shedding their Ross surname, they chose Stewart, the name of one of Dorchester County's more prominent white families. Why they chose this surname is not known. While many runaway slaves apparently chose aliases to protect their identities from slave catchers in the north, some probably adopted the names that they themselves recognized as their rightful names even under slavery. Some rejected outright the names their white masters had assigned them, assignments that may have often disregarded blood and familial ties that were important to the slave. Whether this was the case for the Rosses is uncertain. Ben took the name James Stewart; Robert chose John Stewart, and Henry first chose Levin Stewart, but then changed it to William Henry Stewart.⁴⁹ If the brothers chose the name Stewart for reasons other than familial ties, then their reasons might have been quite complicated. James A. Stewart, the Pattison's lawyer and one of the most powerful white men on the Eastern Shore, may have represented power and control, a good reason to take his name. But James A. Stewart was also a large, and quite unsympathetic, slaveholder. John T. Stewart, son of Joseph, and James A. Stewart's brother, was a modest slaveholder, a local shipbuilder and merchant and was not nearly as powerful as his brother. John T. Stewart did, however, work with and own a boat with the Bowley brothers. The other white John T. Stewart was the son of Levin Stewart (Joseph Stewart's brother,) who had manumitted all

of his slaves, including the Bowleys, decades before. This John T. did not own slaves, was a union sympathizer and was in partnership with a free black man named Denwood Clash during the Civil War. For which man, if at all, Robert chose this name is impossible to know.⁵⁰

Robert, Ben and Henry Ross's choice of the Stewart name may have had different meanings for all of them; it remains a curiosity, however, that they took the name of this complicated and powerful white family. Interestingly, the two men who fled with Tubman and her brothers, John Chase and Peter Jackson, also chose aliases that were the same as powerful white Eastern Shore men. John Chase became Daniel Lloyd, and Peter Jackson became Tench Tilghman. Daniel Lloyd, the white man, had been Frederick Douglass's playmate when they were children, and he was the son of Edward Lloyd, the largest slaveholder and richest man on the Eastern Shore. Daniel Lloyd was married to Kate Henry, John Campbell Henry's daughter. Tench Tilghman was also a very wealthy man, owning vast tracks of land in Talbot County, and was descended from a famed Revolutionary War hero.⁵¹ Perhaps, however, these freedom seekers felt powerful and wealthy in spirit as they embraced freedom.

Ben, William Still wrote in his Journal C, was 28, of medium height and "chestnut color," intelligent, and was owned by "Eliza Ann Brodins" [Brodess], who lived near "Bucktown, Cambridge," Maryland. Ben described Eliza as being "very Devilish." He told Still that it was "difficult for 3 slaves to support a family of 8 whites," and that they had fled out of fear of being sold. Ben also told Still that he had left behind a sister, "Mary Ann Williams," who wanted to "come away" as well. Jane Kane was 22, and she told Still that she had been used "very hardly" by her master "Rash [Horatio] Jones," and

that her new name would be Catherine Kane. Still described Henry as “smart,” 22 years old, with chestnut color, who left behind a wife, Harriet Ann, and two little sons. Still had little time left to record any information about Robert, Harriet’s oldest brother. Robert was 35 years old, Still recorded, of chestnut color, and he too had left behind two children.⁵³ Still provided them with funds to get to the next station, probably New York City, where Jacob Gibbs most probably helped them along to Albany, NY.⁵⁴

In Albany, and in Troy across the Hudson River, Tubman sought aid from Stephen Myers, a black abolitionist and a member of the local Vigilance Committee and publisher of the area’s black newspaper. Tubman had several friends and relatives in Troy and Albany; some were Maryland runaways, including John and Mary Hooper and William J. Bowley, among others.⁵⁵ John Hooper was a fugitive himself, having fled from the Eastern Shore sometime in the early 1840s. He had “lived near Frederick Douglass in his boyhood,” and was “an acquaintance then of Fred Douglas [sic].”⁵⁶ The Hoopers were well known Underground Railroad operators in the area, and fugitives coming through the area used their home as a safe house.⁵⁷ Tubman and her brothers may have stopped here for a few days rest, or headed straight to Syracuse or Rochester and then St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, where family and friends awaited them.⁵⁸

In Canada, the three brothers and Jane, now named Catherine settled into a home with other runaways then living in St. Catharines. The Bowleys had moved to Chatham, 140 miles west of St. Catharines, where they settled into a rapidly growing community of fugitive slaves, most of whom had made their way to Canada from the Midwest through Detroit and the western shores of Lake Erie.⁵⁹ Ben (now James Stewart), and his bride Catherine moved on to Chatham to live with John and Kessiah Bowley and their small

family sometime between the summer of 1855 and the spring of 1856. John and Kessiah had settled in Chatham probably not long after they had arrived in Canada in 1851, where John may have tried farming or other types of manual labor. He may have pursued blacksmithing; though no records exist which indicate he did so.⁶⁰ The following year, Catherine gave birth to a son, Elijah Ross Stewart, who was soon followed by the arrival of John and Kessiah's son, Harkless.⁶¹ Chatham and nearby communities had larger and more well established black fugitive communities; aid, in the form of housing, schooling, and economic advancement held greater promise there than in St. Catharines.

Tubman's other brothers, Robert (now John Stewart), and Henry (now William Henry Stewart), settled in St. Catharines. Both were common laborers for a time, but eventually John became a coachman for two local white doctors, and William Henry tried his hand at farming.⁶² William Henry later told an interviewer, "at first, I made pretty good headway," but he then lost a \$200 investment in a rented farm when he and one of his brothers "got into some trouble."⁶³ In 1861 or 1862, William Henry bought six acres of land in Grantham, Lincoln County, Ontario, right outside of St. Catharines, where he settled down with his wife, Harriet Ann and his four children, William, John, Caroline and Mary.⁶⁴ Harriet Ann arrived from Dorchester County shortly after William Henry, making her way north with at least one of their children, then called William Henry Stewart, Jr., and possibly a second, John Isaac.⁶⁵ The whereabouts of Tubman's youngest brother, Moses, however, remains unknown. No record of him after his escape from slavery has been located.

Back on the Eastern Shore, it was not long before the three brothers, Jane, and the other two men were discovered missing. Slave catchers arrived at Dr. A. C. Thompson's

plantation, looking for information as to the whereabouts of the brothers – for at first they may not have suspected that the other runaways were involved. Dr. Thompson told them that he thought they were supposed to have visited Ben and Rit for Christmas, but that he had not seen them himself. According to Bradford, Thompson asked,

‘Have you been down to Old Ben’s?’ ... ‘Yes.’ ‘What does Old Rit say?’ ‘Old Rit says not one of ‘em came this Christmas. She was looking for ‘em most all day, and most broke her heart about it.’ ‘What does Old Ben say?’ ‘Old Ben says that he hasn’t seen one of his children this Christmas.’ ‘Well, if Old Ben says that, they haven’t been round.’ And so the man-hunters went off disappointed.⁶⁶

Ben’s clever play on words helped him avoid telling the truth; but it would not be so easy as time went on. As more and more slaves took flight from the region, suspicion started to settle on a few free blacks then living in Dorchester and Caroline counties. Because most of their children had successfully run away at this point, Ben and Rit were increasingly at risk. Ben’s reputation as a trusted and reliable former slave protected him for a time. As an important asset to Dr. A.C. Thompson, Ben was doubly protected, though not for long. Eastern Shore slaveholders were becoming restless, and in a relatively short period of time, no one was given the benefit of the doubt; even a man like Thompson could not protect a suspected Underground Railroad agent indefinitely.

Ben must have been getting nervous; on June 11, 1855, a bill of sale was filed at the Dorchester County courthouse, recording a prior purchase by Ben Ross of his wife Rit from Eliza Brodess for \$20. The transaction, however, demonstrates Eliza’s deviousness and underhanded treatment of Rit.⁶⁷ Though Rit was close to seventy years old, and the lawsuit had made it apparent that Rit should have been freed at age 45, Eliza still managed to “sell” her for cash. The filing of the transaction merely recorded a prior transaction; the bill of sale “having been neglected to be filed,” by Eliza Brodess, was

finally recorded when she appeared before the court on June 11, 1855 to acknowledge the prior transaction. When Ben may have actually purchased Rit is not known. He may have felt he had no choice; to secure his wife's "freedom" meant he had to have ownership of her. Her slave status remained ambiguous, though, and Ben could not manumit her, as he did Maria Bailey and Aaron Manokey in 1843, because Rit was then over forty-five years of age, the maximum age limit for legal manumission. Worried over increased attention to his activities after his sons had run away, Ben may have gone to Brodess and insisted that she file a record of the transaction, in the event that he might need to flee and take Rit with him. Ben would need proof of his ownership of Rit to travel out of the state with her.

Eliza Brodess, in the meantime, must have been increasingly frustrated with the turn of events. Though the Pattison lawsuit had been dismissed by the court in September 1854, making it possible finally for Eliza to sell any or all of Rit's children or grandchildren, her financial situation remained unsettled. When the three brothers ran away that Christmas, Eliza lost over one third of her assets.⁶⁸ She began to suspect that John Mills was not acting in her best interest as co-administrator of Edward Brodess's estate. On December 20, 1855, Eliza filed a Bill of Complaint against Mills, charging him with fraud in the administration of her husband's estate. She claimed that Mills had sold slaves and personal assets without her permission and that he failed to make an accounting of the income and disbursements made in the course of administering the estate, which included proceeds from hiring out her slaves. Eliza wanted the court to force Mills to deliver up the balance of the estate, because, she claimed, he was indebted to her for "a large sum of money, which he has hitherto refused to pay."⁶⁹ She may have

even suspected that Mills had actually sold Robert, Ben and Henry illegally, and then claimed they had run away. She asked the court to force Mills to produce a list of the “sales of Negroes, stating in particular what Negroes were sold by him, to whom they were sold, by what authorization and for what price?”⁷⁰

All of this gave Harriet Tubman reason to worry about the rest of her family remaining on the Eastern Shore. Her sister, still owned by Brodess, was at increased risk of being sold now that her brothers had escaped. At the same time, other factors were converging that made it increasingly difficult to execute raids to bring away slaves. The New Year had brought more tension to the area, and frustrated Eastern Shore slaveholders were increasingly angered by the growing numbers of runaway slaves, urged on, they imagined, by unknown abolitionist forces that lurked in free black homes, sowing notions of freedom and liberty among the slave community. By Easter, 1855, rumors stoked fears of an impending insurrection by unidentified free and enslaved blacks in Dorchester and Talbot counties. Meetings of concerned white citizens were held to formulate plans to suppress meetings held by blacks, particularly “illegal” black schools, unless they were held under the supervision of a local white person.⁷¹ Searches were made of black homes, where guns and other possible weapons were supposedly seized. Slaveholders, the newspapers announced, were to keep their slaves home during the Easter holiday. The editor of the *Cambridge Chronicle* did not, however, believe the rumors, and he denounced the possibility that white abolitionists were in their midst, readying the black community to strike out against whites. He was in the minority, apparently. Swift condemnation of his call for reason followed from fellow citizens of

Dorchester County, and shortly thereafter the newspaper folded. One irate resident called for the expulsion of all free blacks from the State of Maryland. Many agreed.⁷²

Tubman remained in Canada for some months with her family members during the winter of 1855. That spring or early summer, Tubman, her brothers John and James Stewart, and James's wife, Catherine Stewart, were interviewed by Benjamin Drew, a Boston abolitionist, school principal and journalist, who had traveled to Canada to meet former slaves who had fled further north to escape the Fugitive Slave Law. Drew wanted to record stories of life under slavery from the fugitive slaves themselves and to document the living conditions of the freeman in Canada. His efforts were in direct response to a culmination of events that had dealt a heavy blow to the antislavery movement. The Kansas–Nebraska Bill of 1854 provided for two new territories to be carved out of the remains of the former Louisiana Purchase, the northernmost part called Nebraska, and the southern portion, Kansas. The settlers of each new territory then had the right to decide for themselves whether to allow slavery. Northern opponents of the extension of slavery into the new territories balked at this repeal of the Missouri Compromise agreement, to keep slavery out of the area. The apparent strengthening of southern slave power was anathema to abolitionists' hopes for an end to all slavery in the states.

Adding fuel to a glowing fire, two books were published during this period that defended the institution of slavery as a benevolent and caring institution that provided for the protection of black people. George Fitzhugh's Sociology for the South; or, the Failure of Free Society, and Reverend Nehemiah Adams's, A Southside View of Slavery both argued the view that slavery was far more beneficial and less oppressive than

abolitionists had led the public to believe and that the northern wage labor system was in fact worse. They both claimed that slaves were actually happy in the South. Directly challenging Harriet Beecher Stowe's description of slavery in her runaway bestseller, Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852), Fitzhugh and Adams claimed authority through first hand observations of the slave system at work, challenging Northern abolitionists claims, about the injustices and horrors of slavery, as purely emotional and without merit.

Drew, then, sought to counter such claims by publishing his interviews with the Canadian fugitives in The Refugee: or the North-side View of Slavery.⁷³ Drew's interview with Tubman was the first of its kind to be published; unfortunately brief, it does draw attention to the fact that she chose to be known by her real name, Harriet Tubman. Her brothers, John and James, preferred the surname Seward, a variation on the name Stewart.⁷⁴ Fresh from slavery, they minced no words about its horrors. John told Drew he had been waiting twenty years to come away. He had been suspicious of abolitionists at first; he was "afraid of a trick."⁷⁵ James lamented the sale of his niece before they could get away, and told Drew "where I come from, it would make your skin creep, and your hair stand on end," to see what happens in slavery.⁷⁶ Catherine told Drew how Horatio Jones, her owner, had inflicted brutal treatment upon her and her family.⁷⁷ Tubman told Drew that they longed to return to Maryland to be with family and friends, only "if we could be as free there as we are here."⁷⁸

With her family safely in Canada, Tubman returned to Philadelphia to earn more money to continue her personal campaign of liberation. In October 1855, she attended the National Colored Convention held at Franklin Hall in Philadelphia. Frederick Douglass, Jacob Gibbs, and Stephen Myers of New York; William Cooper Nell, Charles

Lenox Remond, and John S. Rock from Massachusetts, and William Still, Robert Purvis, and many others from Philadelphia, were all in attendance, along with 60 other delegates from New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut. Tubman's friends from Dorchester County, the Rev. Samuel Green and his wife Catherine "Kitty" Green may have been among the 40 delegates from the "cotton states."⁷⁹ The Convention gave Tubman the opportunity to meet with powerful black abolitionists in other cities and towns in the Northeast. The convention also provided an outlet for her expanding notions of liberty and freedom beyond the confines of the Underground Railroad. Intimate with Philadelphia's community of women's rights activists, black mutual aid societies, and black suffrage organizations, Tubman was eager to participate in an organized national black rights movement. Men dominated the convention. Mary Ann Shadd, publisher of the *Provincial Freeman*, an influential black Canadian newspaper, was the only woman allowed to attend as a delegate. Nevertheless, Tubman and women like her were a reminder to the convention that they too should not be forgotten.

Many attendees took time to visit Passmore Williamson in Philadelphia's Moyamensing Prison, where he was being held in contempt for refusing to produce a fugitive slave woman named Jane Johnson, and her two young sons, in court. Williamson, among others, had been successful in helping Jane and her children escape from her owner who was then in Philadelphia transacting some business. Williamson, a white man, was a member of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society and was closely associated with William Still and Philadelphia's Underground Railroad networks in the black and white abolitionist community. Tubman probably knew Williamson before his incarceration; in any case on October 20th, two days after the closing of the Convention,

Tubman and her friend, Catherine Green, visited him in his cell.⁸⁰ Williamson was one of many influential white abolitionists Tubman was drawn to: standing firm on principle, they gambled their freedom and livelihoods to protect fugitive slaves and fight to end slavery. Her friendship was not taken for granted, as Williamson and many like him came to admire, some with great awe, Tubman's tenacity and commitment, recognizing that her efforts far exceeded even their most impassioned and dangerous work on the behalf of the slave.

Among her admirers was Thomas Garrett who in mid December 1855, wrote to Eliza Wigham, Secretary of the Ladies Emancipation Society of Edinburgh, Scotland, about Tubman, and described her as "a noble woman... in whose veins flow not one drop of Caucasian blood." Garrett went on to describe the journeys she was undertaking to liberate her family and friends. Wigham and her sister Mary Edmundson, were both staunch abolitionists and Quakers, who raised funds for not only Garrett's efforts to help liberate slaves, but also for Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Wendell Phillips and their campaigns against slavery in the United States. Garrett wrote to the sisters, keeping them informed of the latest struggles in Wilmington, Delaware and to relay some of the more compelling and dramatic slave stories and rescues he was familiar with. Such communication was vital to raising funds from sources both in the U.S. and abroad, for these tales fed abolitionists' constant thirst for authentic slave experiences to validate and support the cause of the slave.⁸¹ Though Garrett did not mention Tubman by name, he told Wigham that Tubman had made four trips to her "neighborhood" bringing away seventeen of her family and friends. Tubman had spent "every dollar she could earn," to get them away. Garrett told Wigham he was proud of his acquaintance with

Tubman, and that he marveled at her devotion to her family and friends at the risk of her own health and liberty.⁸²

Though Tubman successfully brought north William Henry's wife, Harriet Ann, and their son, William Henry Stewart, Jr., sometime during 1855 or early 1856, the diligence of the slaveholders and slave catchers on the Eastern Shore made rescues increasingly difficult. She could not risk endangering her parents' safety; she tried to vary her hiding places to avoid putting them in harm's way. She stayed, at times, with the Rev. Green and his wife, Kitty in East New Market, but she may have also stayed with other black families in the area, or secreted in swamps and other hideouts.⁸³ During one attempted rescue mission she spent three months in Dorchester County, waiting for the opportunity to bring away family members, possibly her sister Rachel's and her sister's children, Angerine and Benjamin.⁸⁴ It is remarkable that she was not betrayed, as so many other southern agents and runaways had been.

Tubman faced great risks while waiting; there was always the opportunity for unexpected exposure. On one occasion, Tubman ran into her master, probably Dr. Thompson, "in the fields," but Garrett wrote her "color had changed so much "that he did not recognize her, nor did her brother and sister. Garrett imagined that, because Tubman no longer toiled under the sun, her skin color had changed enough to make such a difference. Other times it may have been her fine clothing, too. Tubman purposely wore expensive clothing on occasion, including silk dresses, to add to the illusion that she belonged in the world of middle class free blacks, not that of the poorly clad field hands. It is no wonder that Thompson and the other slaveholders who knew her failed to recognize her.

On another occasion, Tubman “went even to the very village where she would be most likely to meet one of the masters to whom she had been hired; and having stopped at the Market and bought a pair of live fowls, she went along the street with her sun-bonnet well over her face,” acting the part of an aged and “decrepit” woman. Upon seeing her “master... she pulled the string which tied the legs of the chickens; they began to flutter and scream.” While Tubman lowered her bonnet over her eyes and stooped down to attend to the squawking birds, “her master ... went on his way, little thinking that he was brushing the very garments of the woman who had dared to steal herself, and others of his belongings.”⁸⁵ Later, Tubman recognized one of her former masters seated near her on a train. She quickly grabbed a newspaper that had been left on her seat and pretended to read it. Tubman was not sure if it was “bottom side up or not,” but her master, knowing she could not read, did not bother with her. “The Lord,” Tubman later said, “save me that time too.”⁸⁶

In early December 1855, Tubman brought away one man, probably Henry Hooper, who arrived in William Still’s office on the sixth; she immediately returned to Dorchester county, determined to bring away her sister – probably Rachel – “now the last one left in slavery,” Rachel’s children, her sister-in-law, Mary Manokey with her three children, and “one male friend.”⁸⁷ She did not succeed, however, but she was probably responsible for directing Joseph Cornish, a local Dorchester County freedom seeker, who appeared at William Still’s home in Philadelphia on Christmas Day. Cornish, 40, had been a preacher in the African Methodist Church for about seven years, but his owner, Captain Samuel W. LeCompte, had decided recently to sell him, so Cornish set his sights on freedom instead. Leaving behind a free wife and children, Cornish was forwarded to

Canada after a couple of meals and a good night's sleep.⁸⁸ On the following day, Garrett forwarded George Wilmer, a slave from Kent County, Maryland, who was himself an agent on the Underground Railroad.⁸⁹ Whether Wilmer was being pursued or not is unclear; curiously, he passed through Still's office the following fall with William Cornish of Dorchester County, possibly a clue to one of the many paths to freedom Tubman and her friends had come to rely on – this one through the Sassafras River region of Kent County. Somehow, Wilmer juggled a variety of roles; as a both slave and an Underground Railroad operator, living a very precarious dual life on Maryland's upper Eastern Shore.⁹⁰

Tubman could not rest; her sister Rachel was still trapped on Brodess's plantation. During Tubman's trip at Christmas time 1855, Rachel could not get away; her children had been separated from her and she would not leave them behind. Eliza Brodess and her son John, who had taken over the administration of his father's estate, probably would not let Rachel visit her parents at Poplar Neck that Christmas, as they had allowed Ben, Henry and Robert to do the year before. Whether they suspected Ben and Rit of aiding the brother's escape or not, they were not about to take any more chances with the last of their slaves by allowing Rachel traditional freedoms over the holiday. Where Rachel's children, Ben and Angerine were at this time is not known. Tubman returned to Philadelphia gravely disappointed, but still wholly determined to return to bring her whole family together in the North.

By May 1856, Tubman had earned and collected enough money to attempt another trip to the Eastern Shore. On May 11, Thomas Garrett wrote J. Miller McKim and William Still that he had forwarded four young men to Longwood on the 9th, with

Tubman following on the 10th.⁹¹ The next day, Still recorded in his Journal C that Harriet Tubman had arrived with the four unidentified men after having made a stop at the home of “Mrs. Buchannon.” With the help of Nathaniel Depee, a member of the Vigilance Committee who boarded the men for 2 days, the party was forwarded to Canada. Harriet had been lucky, again.

Just two weeks earlier, two men had been hauled into Dorchester County court for aiding and abetting a slave to run away.⁹² Five days after Tubman had stopped at Still’s office with the four runaways, another freedom seeker, Jesse Slacum of Dorchester County, made his way to Still’s office.⁹³ Possibly a slave of, or related to a slave owned by Dr. Thompson, Slacum was just one of several running away during that spring and summer. Thompson responded to this rash of runaways by decreasing the terms of servitude of twenty-seven men, women, and children. Among them was twenty-four year old Mary Manokey Ross, the wife of Robert, now John Stewart, who had fled a year and a half earlier. Thompson, “for divers [sp] good causes and considerations,” manumitted Mary and her children, John Henry, aged 6, Moses aged 4, and Ritty, aged 2 years, when “they shall attain the age of thirty years.”⁹⁴ Mary, then, would be free in 1862, but her children would have to remain enslaved until the late 1870s and 1880s. This manumission record also provided for the same term limits, that is, until the age of thirty, for twenty-three other slaves on the list, including members of the Sprig, Slacum, Kiah, Young, and Manokey families, some as young as two months old.⁹⁵ Thompson probably hoped that such reductions in the terms of service might induce these young slaves to reconsider any thoughts they may have entertained about running away.⁹⁶

But Thompson was inconsistent in his treatment of his enslaved people. In fact, he was having many problems of his own, only some of which were connected to notions of liberty surfacing in his slave quarters. He had overextended his credit when he bought thousands of acres in Caroline County and could not meet the terms of the notes. During the 1840s and early 1850s, Thompson sold several of the slaves from his father's estate. All of the slaves had limited terms of service, so they could not be sold out of the State. To the complete shock and disbelief of Ben Ross and most of the Thompson's slaves, Thompson sold young Susan Manokey, Mary Manokey's sister and Jerry and Polly Manokey's daughter, in 1847 to an East New Market man who then sold her to the wife of a slave trader, Miles Tindle. Tindle immediately sold Susan, then eighteen years old, illegally beyond the limits of the state. He was brought before the county court to answer charges of selling a term slave out of the state, but the damage was done. Jerry and Polly had lost a daughter; Mary and her siblings had lost their sister. It was a betrayal that would not be forgotten by Thompson's slave community.⁹⁷ By the mid 1850s, Thompson was experiencing severe financial difficulties. Facing bankruptcy, Thompson began, in 1854, to consolidate some of his landholdings still left in Dorchester County, hoping to keep his creditors at bay. But as he struggled to avoid bankruptcy, his slaves became the equivalent of ready cash. Though he had been bound by the terms of his father's last will and testament to manumit his father's slaves at specific dates, Thompson started to sell some of them instead. Over the next few years, Thompson continued to sell slaves off, creating lasting bitterness and increasing tension in the slave quarters.⁹⁸ No slave seemed exempt; slaves with very limited terms of a year or two and young children with twenty or more years of service were sold, providing the easy cash he

desperately needed.⁹⁹ Dr. Thompson's actions were an unforgivable betrayal, and his enslaved people knew well that his poor business judgment had caused his financial predicament.¹⁰⁰ Ben and Rit would later tell an interviewer that Thompson "had reached out too far [and] several of his farms had slipped out of his hands," and that poor financial circumstances had led him to "make frequent sales" of slaves, thus reducing his "stock."¹⁰¹

If he did not know definitively, surely he must have suspected that Mary Manokey was hoping to get away like her husband Robert Ross had done. Selling Mary and her children was not an attractive option; Thompson's earlier efforts to sell some of his own and his father's slaves had created such havoc in the slave quarters that he may have felt it was too risky, particularly in the case of Mary. It was probably during this time period that he sent Mary and her children to live with his daughter, Sarah Catherine Haddaway, in Talbot County, removing her from what he may have perceived as a persistent threat of escape from Dorchester and Caroline Counties.¹⁰²

Though Thompson may have been reluctant to sell Mary Manokey and she was probably safe from sale out of the region, Tubman was determined to bring her, along with Tubman's sister Rachel, and Rachel's children, North. But after escorting the unidentified men to Canada in May, Tubman became quite ill. A respiratory ailment, possibly pneumonia brought on by exposure to the elements during her last raid, weakened her considerably, so much so she could not make another trip south until the following September. By that time Garrett voiced concern that she was "quite feeble, her voice much impaired from a cold taken last winter."¹⁰⁸ Garrett was deeply worried that her health had been permanently affected.

It was possibly during this trip in May, when Tubman was escorting the men North that she became uneasy, sensing that something was wrong and that they were in danger. She told Sanborn that she always seemed to know when danger was near; her heart would “go flutter, flutter.”¹⁰⁹ Some thirty miles from Wilmington, probably in the vicinity of Blackbird, her intuition led her to immediately change her route. “God told her to stop,” which she did, “but then he told her to leave the road, and turn to the left.” As they approached a “small stream of tide water,” they looked for a boat or a bridge to cross over but found none. Their only option was to wade across, but it was cold and the depth of the stream was unknown to them, so the men refused to go into the water. Tubman, convinced they had no choice and that the risk of capture was too great, plunged in and waded across without them. The water reached her “arm pits,” but no higher, and she safely reached the other side. Seeing that she had not drowned, the men reluctantly followed. They came upon a second stream, and after crossing that they made their way to the house of a black family who took them in, dried them off, fed them and hid them until the next evening when they could proceed to Wilmington. Having run out of money, Tubman gave the woman of the family her undergarments to “pay for their kindness.” Garrett recalled that when Tubman finally made it to his office, “she was so hoarse she could hardly speak.” She also had a “violent toothache,” which she remedied by knocking out the offending tooth with a rock.¹¹⁰

Tubman’s paths to freedom often led her to confront many unforeseen barriers. Her desire to have her family secure in freedom in the North, however, kept her focused on her mission: she would not rest until they were all together in Canada. Risking her own

health and safety, she would return several more times to the Eastern Shore, escalating the chances that she would be discovered and re-enslaved.

CHAPTER SIX NOTES

¹ John W. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977). 415

² Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony. 415. The identity of the white friend is unknown. It could have been Dr. Thompson, John T. Stewart, or another wealthy man who could afford the approximate \$1200 to \$1500 price for the three brothers. According to testimony given by Dr. A.C. Thompson in 1853, Thompson hired "three of them, two boys and a girl, for which he paid \$120.00 per year, he has now Robert in his possession for which he pays \$55.00 per year." "Deposition." Chancery Papers 249. Dorchester County Court, Dorchester County Court House. Cambridge, MD.

³ Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony. Henry Stewart told his interviewer that the white man told them, "Boys, I can't buy you. If you can get away, get away." 416

⁴ Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony. 416

⁵ "Journal C of Station 2 of the Underground Railroad (Philadelphia, Agent William Still)." Pennsylvania Abolition Society. Reel 32. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, PA.. August 28, 1854.

⁶ Samuel Harrington, "\$250 Reward," *The Cambridge Democrat*, Cambridge, MD, June 17, 1854.

⁷ "Journal C." The entry indicates "July 29 [with "3rd" crossed out] /55" but I believe it should read June 29th, 1854 due to its placement in the journal between June 20th and July 3rd, 1854. It is not known whether Still used the familial expression "sister Harriet" to mean a blood kin of Tubman, or a more fictive use of the word "sister." While it is entirely possible that Ben Ross fathered children by another woman, little evidence has surfaced to date to suggest this possibility. However, the possibility that Tubman and Winnibar are related, either as sister and brother or some other kin relationship, should not be discounted. According to Harrington's reward notice, Winnibar was 27 years old in 1854, placing his birth sometime around 1827, which coincides with the period of separation between Ben and Rit due to Edward Brodess's removal to Bucktown.

⁸ "Journal C." See also, Massachusetts People of Color Census, 1865, New Bedford, Bristol County; 1860 U.S. Census, New Bedford, Bristol County, Massachusetts; and Winory Johnson, "Information Wanted," *The Christian Recorder*, Philadelphia, July 7, 1866. In 1866 Winnibar, [or William or Winory] posted a notice in the Christian Recorder seeking information "of Charlotte and Ellen Johnson, who formerly belonged to

one Samuel Harrington in a town called Tobacco Stick, Maryland. They were sold out of the State in 1854. Any information of their whereabouts will be gratefully received by their brother, Winory Johnson, No. 14 Cedar Street, New Bedford, Massachusetts."

⁹ Sam Green, Sr. had been manumitted in 1832, and Catherine's freedom had been purchased by Sam in 1842. Both of their children, Sam, Jr. and his sister Sarah, remained enslaved, however.

¹⁰ "Journal C." August 28, 1854. See also, Charles L. Blockson, The Underground Railroad: Dramatic Firsthand Accounts of Daring Escapes to Freedom. (New York: Berkley Books, 1987). 212-213 for information on the Bustill's large and successful family. For more information on Samuel Green Jr., see Richard Albert Blondo, "In Search of Samuel Green," *The Archivists' Bulldog*, April 30, 1990.; and Sam Green Sr., see Richard Albert Blondo, "Samuel Green: A Black Life in Antebellum Maryland" (Masters, University of Maryland, 1988).

¹¹ Blondo, "Sam Green". 21. Transcribed letter, Sam Green, Jr., to Sam Green Sr., Sept. 10, 1854. "I saw Harriet Caurishe in Philadelphia." This is assumed to be Harriet Tubman, possibly going by the name of "Cornish."

¹² "Letter, James A. Bowley to "Aunt" [Harriet Tubman]." Harriet Tubman Collection. Harriet Tubman Home Museum. Auburn, N.Y. It is not known which school Bowley attended. Martha Coffin Wright met James in 1868, writing to her daughter, Ellen Wright Garrison, that Harriet worked "two years at a dollar a week & paid 50cts a wk for his board, & sent him to school." "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, December 22, 1869." Garrison Family papers. Box 39. f 1000, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA. Bowley may have attended the famous Lombard Street School for black children in Philadelphia.

¹³ Franklin Sanborn wrote that Tubman made another trip in the fall of 1852, bringing away 9 runaways. Sanborn also suggests that this is about the time Tubman met Thomas Garrett. Franklin Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, July 17, 1863. Tubman had already made four trips during 1850 and 1851 for a total of approximately 20-22 runaways. She brought another 9 out in 1852. Thomas Garrett wrote in December 1855 that Harriet had made "four successful trips to the neighborhood she left, & brought away 17 of her brothers, sisters and friends." James McGowan, Station Master on the Underground Railroad. (Moylan, PA: The Whimsie Press, 1977). Letter, Thomas Garrett to Eliza Wigham, Wilmington, December 16, 1855, 123-126. It is not known whether she made any trips in 1853. In the spring of 1854, Tubman made another trip to Dorchester County, hoping to get away her brothers, and a sister and her children. She was unsuccessful, but she did bring away Winnebar Johnson, though it is not known whether she brought any others away at that time. She did, though, relay information to Samuel Green Jr., to help him affect his own escape in August 1854. She made a second trip in 1854, bringing away 9, including her brothers, that December. She made two

more trips in 1855, bringing out one person each time for a total of two in 1855. Thomas Garrett may have been slightly off in his estimate of the numbers of runaways she had brought away between 1852 and 1855. So, in short, by from December 1850 to December 1855, it can be assumed that she had brought away a total of approximately 40-42 freedom seekers.

¹⁴ Thomas Garrett is known to have discussed Tubman's rescue missions with Mott and Garrison in December 1856, and it is likely that they had known of Tubman for at least a year or two prior to this discussion. Mott, in fact, may have known of Tubman from the earliest days of Tubman's freedom, one of the "white ladies" Tubman claimed she dreamed about and then met when she escaped to Philadelphia in 1849. See Letter, Garrett to Eliza Wigham, Dec. 27, 1856 in McGowan, Station Master. 134-137.

¹⁵ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Sisters, October 8, 1868." Garrison Family Papers. 39. folder 996, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

¹⁶ For more information on this network of abolitionists and URR operators in Kennett, PA, see William Kashatus, Just over the Line: Chester County and the Underground Railroad. (West Chester, PA: Chester County Historical Society with Penn State University Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Aileen Kraditor, Means and Ends in Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967). 62.

¹⁸ For further discussions of abolitionism and abolitionists, see Shirley J. Yee, Black Women Abolitionists, a Study in Activism, 1828-1860. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1989). ; Jean Fagan Yellin, Women and Sisters: The Anti-Slavery Feminist in American Culture. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989). ; Ronald Walters, The Anti-Slavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). ; Patricia Morton, Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996). ; Kraditor, Means and Ends. (; Margaret M.R. Kellow, "The Divided Mind of Anti-Slavery Feminism: Lydia Maria Child and the Construction of African American Womanhood," in Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, ed. Patricia Morton (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996). ; Julie Roy Jeffrey, The Great Silent Army of Abolitionism: Ordinary Women in the Antislavery Movement. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). ; Debra Gold Hanson, "The Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society and the Limits of Gender Politics," in The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994). ; Lawrence Friedman, Gregarious Saints: Self and Community in American Abolitionism, 1830-1870. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982). ; Milton Sernett, Abolition's Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute and the Black Freedom Struggle. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986). ; John Stauffer, The Black

Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). ; Henry Meyer, All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). ; and C. Peter Ripley, ed., The Black Abolitionist Papers, Vols. 1-5 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

¹⁹ Hanson, "Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society." 52

²⁰ Kellow, "Divided Mind." 108

²¹ Kellow, "Divided Mind." 108

²² Phebe Hanaford, Daughters of America, or Women of the Century. (Augusta, ME: True and Company, 1882). 155

²³ Yee, Black Women. 99.

²⁴ Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 57. Jacob Jackson lived at Parson's Creek, west of Tobacco Stick during part of the 1850s. At one point, however, he moved to the Button's Neck area, south of Church Creek and west of Anthony Thompson's former plantation. Sarah Bradford is the main source of information for this escape story, which is supplemented by Benjamin Drew, . The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery rpt. 1969, Tilden G. Edelstein, ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1855). And "Journal C."

²⁵ Bradford, Scenes. 57 Interestingly, the black spiritual, "The Old Ship of Zion" supposedly has its roots in Anne Arundle Co., Maryland, circa 1830-1840. If this is correct, then perhaps this particular phrase had specific regional importance, thereby increasing the likelihood that its message would be interpreted in a specific way. See Lucy McKim Garrison, William Francis Allen and Charles Pickard Ware, Slave Songs of the South. (New York: A. Simpson & Company, 1867). 102-103; see also, A. S. Jenks, The Chorus. (Philadelphia: A.S. Jenks, 1860). 167-170.

²⁶ Bradford, Scenes. 58.

²⁷ Bradford, Scenes. 58. Meaning, Poplar Neck. Tubman may have planned on meeting them in the Church Creek or Tobacco Stick area, possibly planning to sail up the Choptank River to Poplar Neck in Caroline County.

²⁸ Bradford, Scenes. 59. Robert's wife was Mary Manokey, the slave of Dr. Anthony Thompson. See also, "Anthony C. Thompson to Sundry Negroes." Dorchester County Chattel Records. MDSA. Annapolis, MD. ; and "Anthony C. Thompson to Sarah Catherine Haddaway." Dorchester County Chattel Records, 1851-1860. 1/4/4/45. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.

²⁹ Bradford, Scenes. . 58-59.

³⁰ Bradford, Scenes. "nebber waited for no one." 59

³¹ "Journal C." and William Still, The Underground Railroad. (1871; Reprint, Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1970).

³² Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. (Interview with Mrs. James Seward [Stewart], 28-29.

³³ Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. (Interview with Mrs. James Seward [Stewart], 28-29.

³⁴ Benjamin Drew, . The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. (1855; Reprint, Tilden G. Edelstein, ed. Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, MA: 1969). 29. See also, Bradford, Scenes. 63. This is probably near the Blackwater River, where Jones owned a farm not too far from Anthony Thompson's former plantation.

³⁵ "Journal C."

³⁶ Bradford, Scenes.

³⁷ Bradford, Scenes. 61. It had, in fact, been a little over five years.

³⁸ Bradford, Scenes. 61

³⁹ Bradford, Scenes. 60

⁴⁰ Bradford, Scenes. 62

⁴¹ Bradford, Scenes. 61

⁴² McGowan, Station Master. 48-69. Garrett had long been suspected of being an URR agent, but in 1848 he was caught aiding a family of slaves escape from their Maryland owners. Found guilty, Garrett lost and was fined a total of \$1500, although years later Garrett insisted he lost everything. Defiant as ever, however, he announced to the court at his sentencing that he would never pass up the opportunity to assist a runaway slave. Interestingly, one of the presiding judges at the trial was Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, who would later deliver the landmark and very controversial Dred Scott decision in 1857.

⁴³ "Letter, Thomas Garrett to J. Miller Mckim." Wilmington, DE.; in William Still, The Underground Railroad. (1871; reprint, Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1970). 305.

⁴⁴ Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. 29. No reward advertisement has been found for Robert, Ben and Henry. Robert and Ben were assessed at \$400 each and Henry was assessed at \$250. See, "Assessors Field Book." Dorchester County Board of County Commissioners. C688. 1-5-2-12, MDSA. Annapolis..

⁴⁵ George Ross's relationship to Tubman's family is unknown. It is likely, however, that they did travel with Tubman. In 1863, Henry told an interviewer that there were "ten" of them who came away together, which would have included George Ross, William Thompson, and one other individual. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony; "Journal C." 143-146.

⁴⁶ See "Journal C." May 25, 1854. These former slaves were: James Edward Handy (alias Dennis Cannon), who had been owned by Samuel Laws of Seaford. Handy's wife and four children, who could not get away, were owned by Captain Hugh Martin, of Seaford. Henry Delaney (alias Smart Stanley) was also owned by Captain Martin. James Henry Blackson [Blockson] fled from Charles Wright, Lewis N. Wright's brother, also residing in the greater Seaford, DE area. Captain Hugh Martin was active in the slave trade, considered "a popular choice in the packet trade," shipping frequently for such large Baltimore to New Orleans traders as Hope Slater, Joseph Donovan, and Bernard Campbell. See Ralph Clayton, Cash for Blood. The Baltimore to New Orleans Domestic Slave Trade. (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 2002).

⁴⁷ "Pennsylvania." The Underground Railroad: Manuscript materials collected by Professor Siebert. US 5278.36.25. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA.; and, "New York." The Underground Railroad: Manuscript materials collected by Professor Siebert. US 5278.36.25. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA.

⁴⁸ "Vigilance Committee of Philadelphia, Accounts." Pennsylvania Abolition Society. Reel 32. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, PA. ; and "Journal C."

⁴⁹ "Journal C." 143-146, December 29, 1854. See also, "Vigilance Committee Accounts." 379-380, December 29-31, 1854. and, Still, Underground Railroad. 305-307. I prefer using the original "Journal C" records when possible, as it appears that Still made some errors transcribing the information from Journal C to his book, The Underground Railroad. I believe the more accurate document to be Journal C, as those were the notes Still recorded while the fugitives were standing before him. For a discussion of naming practices, see Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom. (New York: Vintage Books, 1976). 180-199; 230-256 ; John W. Blassingame, The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South 2nd ed. (1972. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). 181-183.

⁵⁰ "Assessment Record." Dorchester County Board of County Commissioners. C687. MdHR 18,631, MDSA. Cambridge, MD.

⁵¹ In William Still's Journal C, Still records these names as Daniel Floyd and Staunch Tilghman. John Campbell Henry owned John Chase. Whether these slaves had any blood relationship to either of these men is not known.

⁵³ "Journal C." 143-146; "Vigilance Committee Accounts." 379-380. Robert, in fact, left behind three children, but in the haste of recording testimony, Still probably mis-recorded Robert's response, as he definitely had three children, including newborn Harriet, when he left to go north. Henry told Still that his wife, Harriet Ann, was to be known as Sophia Brown. This may have been in preparation of her changing her name when she herself fled North. Or, Still mixed up the testimony completely. When Henry settled in Canada, the census records indicate his wife's name as Harriet A., and they had two sons, William Henry, Jr., and John. William Henry is consistently recorded as being born in the US, while the Canadian records remain ambiguous as to John's birthplace, although he was probably born in Canada. It is likely that this is probably William Henry's wife, Harriet Ann, from Dorchester County, who must have come north shortly after Henry fled with Tubman in 1854, although no record has been found of their escape. In 1924, a Toronto newspaper reported that Tubman returned to Maryland soon after bringing her brother William Henry to Canada, and she brought away William Henry's wife and their child, William Henry Stewart, Jr. See Fred G. Griffin, "Toronto Minister the Son of a Slave Knew 'Uncle Tom.'" *Toronto Star Weekly*, Toronto, Canada, January 19, 1924.

⁵⁴ "The Underground Railroad: Manuscript Materials Collected by Professor Seibert, Ohio University." Vol. 40. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA.. "Siebert Papers, N.Y." Letter, Frederick Douglass to Siebert, March 27, 1893.

⁵⁵ Bureau of the Census. United States Federal Census, 1850; Bureau of the Census. United States Federal Census, 1860. Rensselaer County, N.Y. Also, see "Letter to Sister Harriet Tubman." Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society Papers. 1:19. William Clements Library. Ann Arbor, MI.; and, "Siebert Papers, N.Y." . According to the New York 1855 census, (1st Ward, Troy, Rensselaer County), William Bowley had been living there for 15 years, John Hooper for 11 years. There are several other possible Eastern Shore, Maryland families in this census, including William and John Meads, and Margaret and William Jones, the Bishops, among others. In the 1860 Federal, and then the New York State 1865 censuses for the same area, there are many more Maryland-born African Americans living in Troy.

⁵⁶ "Siebert Papers, N.Y." Letters, Martin I. Townsend to Siebert, Sept. 4, 1896; April 1, 1897.

⁵⁷ "Siebert Papers, N.Y." ; Letters, Martin I. Townsend to Siebert, Sept. 4, 1896; April 1, 1897; September 7, 1898; and September 14, 1898.

⁵⁸ Tubman may have been related to Hooper. According to Bradford, this person was a cousin. See Bradford, Scenes. 88. Tubman may have also stopped in Syracuse at this time, although she did not start using this stop until possibly the mid 1850s. See "Letter, W.E. Abbott to Maria G. Porter." Rochester Anti-Slavery Society Papers. 1:9. William Clements Library. Ann Arbor, MI.. See also "Siebert Papers, N.Y." Letters, Martin I. Townsend to Seibert.

⁵⁹ Chatham was approximately 30 miles from Detroit, MI.

⁶⁰ Bowley had been trained as a blacksmith and shipbuilder by the Stewarts in Dorchester County, MD.

⁶¹ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Reel 1, Box 3 folder d2. NYPL - Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. New York.. Letter to Conrad, August 15, 1939. Harkless says he was born in 1858, but census records indicate he was born in 1856. Elijah Stewart was born in March, 1856.

⁶² John Stewart worked for first Dr. Grimm. See Canada Ontario, "Assessment Roll, St. Thomas Ward, St. Catharines," (Archives of Ontario, 1855). 15; and by 1860 John Stewart was a coachman for Dr. Mack. See Ontario Canada, "Assessment Roll, St. George's Ward, St. Catharines," (Archives of Ontario, 1860).

⁶³ Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony. Interview with "Henry Stewart, 1863," 416.

⁶⁴ 1861, Ontario, Canada census. (St. Paul's Ward, District 5).

⁶⁵ Griffin, "Toronto Minister." "Harriet Tubman escaped in the first instance with two brothers to St. Catharines. She disappeared and as suddenly reappeared sometime later with her brother's wife and her little boy." This boy must be William Henry Stewart Jr., who was born in the US. According to William Still, when William Henry Stewart Sr. ran away, he left behind his wife Harriet Ann and two children. In the Canadian census, William Henry Stewart, Jr. was the only child listed as being born in the US. Their next child, John is listed as born in 1857, precluding the possibility that he was born in the US, unless of course his age is listed erroneously. It is not known, however, if Harriet Ann was free or enslaved.

⁶⁶ Bradford, Scenes. 62-63

⁶⁷ "Benjamin Ross Paid Eliza Brodess." Liber FJH No. 2. MDSA. Annapolis, MD. 163. Interestingly, the Bill of Sale was not delivered to Ben until October 20, 1855. Perhaps it was then that Ben completed paying the \$20 to Brodess. The transaction records Ben Ross as a resident of Dorchester County. It is possible he was perhaps living at one of Thompson's residences in Dorchester County, though it is likely it was just an oversight

on the part of the court recorder. Ben and Rit appear to have lived at Poplar Neck in Caroline County from the late 1840s through 1857. I suspect that Ben had purchased Rit some years prior to June, 1855, and that increased attention on his activities after his sons had run away forced him to make sure his "ownership" of Rit was secure.

⁶⁸ The three young men had been valued at \$1150, out of a total estate value (based on assessment records) of \$3050. "Field Book 1852."

⁶⁹ "Equity Papers 394." Dorchester County Circuit Court. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.

⁷⁰ "Equity Papers 394." The case continued on for the next four years, during which time both Eliza Brodess and John Mills died.

⁷¹ "The Terrors of Slavery!" *The National Era*, Washington, D.C., April 12, 1855.

⁷² See "Fears of Insurrection," *The National Era*, Washington, D.C., April 26, 1855.; "The Wrath of the Fearful," *The National Era*, Washington, D.C., April 26, 1855.

⁷³ Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery.

⁷⁴ Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. 20, 27-29. Ironically this is the same surname of William Henry Seward, the Governor of New York who would later become so instrumental in helping Tubman secure a home for herself and her family in Auburn, New York.

⁷⁵ "John Seward." Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. . 27.

⁷⁶ "James Seward. Brother of the Foregoing [John Seward.]" Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. 27-28.

⁷⁷ "Mrs. James Seward." Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. 28-29

⁷⁸ "Harriet Tubman." Drew, The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery. 20.

⁷⁹ Kitty Green applied for freedom papers on September 29, 1855, probably for the express purpose of traveling out of the state. Her husband, Samuel Green, had purchased Kitty from Ezekiel Richardson on February 4, 1842, and then Green manumitted her immediately. The delegates from the "cotton states" were not identified in the proceedings of the convention, possibly for their own protection from reprisals back home. Franklin Turner, "Proceedings of the Colored National Convention" (paper presented at the National Convention of the Colored People of the United States, Franklin Hall, Philadelphia, PA, October 16-18, 1855). Elaine McGill, transcriber, Certificates of Freedom, Dorchester County Court 1806-1864. (Privately Printed, 2001). 95-96.

⁸⁰ Kashatus, Just over the Line. 55. See also, "Passmore Williamson's Visitor's Book." Chester County Historical Society. West Chester, PA.

⁸¹ McGowan, Station Master. See pp. 31, 117-131, for more information on this symbiotic relationship between Garrett, Wigham and Edmundson.

⁸² McGowan, Station Master. See also, "Field Book 1852." Eliza Brodess is listed as owning Harry, aged 20, Ben, aged 23, Bob, aged 35, Rachel, aged 27, Angeline, aged 5, and Ben aged 3. "Angeline" is also variously listed as Algerine and Angerine.

⁸³ "Tubman Interview [Seibert]."

⁸⁴ "Letter, Thomas Garrett to Eliza Wigham." Wilmington, DE. In McGowan, Station Master. 123-126.

⁸⁵ Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Sons, 1886). 34-35. Harkless Bowley says this took place on the street in Cambridge. Earl Conrad, Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Microfilm, 2 reels vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: The New York Public Library. Letter, Harkless Bowley to Earl Conrad, August 8, 1939.

⁸⁶ Emma P. Telford. "Harriet: The Modern Moses of Heroism and Visions," Cayuga County Museum, Auburn, NY: circa 1905. 11. "... but he knew I couldn't read an so' didn't spect me, and 'de Lord save me dat time too."

⁸⁷ "Garrett to Wigham, Dec. 16, 1855." in McGowan, Station Master. 125.

⁸⁸ See Still, Underground Railroad. 346; "Journal C." 230; "Vigilance Committee Accounts." 354; and, see also, 1861 Ontario, Canada census; St. Catharine assessment rolls.

⁸⁹ Still, Underground Railroad. 661-662, Letter from Garrett to William Still, December 25, 1855. Garrett claimed that Wilmer had forwarded 25 runaways in four months. Wilmer was owned by Eben Welch, a farmer in Kent County, near Georgetown Crossroads on the Sassafras River, a strategic path to upper Delaware and freedom in the North for Maryland runaways. Wilmer was apparently entitled to great liberties as a slave. He was freed in 1858 through a provision in Welch's will. Wilmer moved to Wilmington, with his wife Margaret, sometime prior to 1860, and was probably an active agent in that city, living but two doors from Severn Johnson and others known to be URR operatives in that city.

⁹⁰ "Journal C." September 5, 1856, p. 288; and "Vigilance Committee Accounts." 330. George Wilmer's owner, Eben Welch manumitted his slaves upon his death, and

provided some land for a few of them. He may have been a particularly lax master, although the details of Wilmer's enslavement are unknown. He may have in fact been manumitted before Welch's death in 1858. The fact that Wilmer fled in December 1855 and then again in 1856 leaves open many questions about Wilmer's slave status, and, was he captured and returned the first time, or was he free at this time? Wilmer may have been free and may have been under suspicion for aiding runaway slaves. William Cornish may have been related to Joseph, although Cornish is a very common name in Dorchester County. Interestingly, William and Joseph lived near one another in St. Catharines. Joseph continued an active ministry in Canada, while William worked as a laborer. See also, William Cornish's interview with the American Freedman's Inquiry Commission, 1863. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony. 423-426.

⁹¹ McGowan, Station Master. 93. Letter, Thomas Garrett to McKim and Still, May 11, 1856. See also, R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania. (Lancaster, PA: John A. Hiestand, 1883).p. 367; and Still, Underground Railroad. 402.

⁹² Charles Hubbard and William Creighton were tried in Dorchester County Circuit Court, Spril 1856, for "aiding and assisting" Levin Creighton, the slave of Pere North, to run away. See, Debra Moxie, Dorchester County Genealogical Magazine. (Cambridge, MD: Privately Printed. March 1996, Vol. XV, No. 6, p. 21.

⁹³ "Journal C." May 16, 1856. See also "Vigilance Committee Accounts." May 16, 1856. Still writes "Slycum" instead of Slacum. Slacum might have been Jerry Ennals Slacum, formerly a slave of Dr. Thompson, or alternatively, Jerry and Jesse could have been related.

⁹⁴ "Thompson to Negroes, May 12, 1856."

⁹⁵ Also Manoca. "Thompson to Negroes, May 12, 1856."

⁹⁶ Interestingly, Jesse Slycum, the runaway who arrived in William Still's office on May 16, 1856, just a few days after Tubman had come through with a party of fugitives, may have been related to the Slacums in Thompson's household, making the timing of Thompson's manumissions even more suspect.

⁹⁷ "Thompson, Anthony C. To V.M. Edmundson." Dorchester County Chattel Records. MDSA. Annapolis, MD..

⁹⁸ The manumissions became more important, though. In 1849 Thompson set new and reduced term limits for many of his slaves, and he continued to do this through the 1850s. But this seemingly benevolent act did not preclude Thompson from selling some of his slaves anyway.

⁹⁹ In 1853, Thompson sold two young children, George (9) and Charlotte (7), to John D. Parker, the former overseer for his father's plantation at Peter's Neck. It may have been a convenience sale for himself and for the children's mother, Sophia Brown, who he manumitted the following June, and who may have been living there all along, hired out to John D. Parker. Or, he could have sold away her children without regard to her feelings. Nevertheless, they were children, and he sold them. See "Anthony C. Thompson to John D. Parker." Dorchester County Chattel Records. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.. On another occasion, Thompson sold ten-year-old Sarah Jane Kiah and her twelve-year-old brother John Henry Kiah for \$750. "Anthony C. Thompson to Jesse Hubbard." Dorchester County Chattel Records. MDSA. Annapolis, MD..

¹⁰⁰ Still, Underground Railroad. 411

¹⁰¹ Still, Underground Railroad. 411.

¹⁰² Thompson later sold Mary and her children to Sarah Catherine. "Thompson to Haddaway, March 16, 1857."

¹⁰⁶ Still, Underground Railroad. (P. 411

¹⁰⁷ Still, Underground Railroad. (p. 411.

¹⁰⁸ McGowan, Station Master. Letter Thomas Garrett to Eliza Wigham, September 12, 1856. 127.

¹⁰⁹ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." See also, Bradford, Scenes. 80.

¹¹⁰ Bradford, Scenes. 50-51. Letter Thomas Garrett to Sarah Bradford, June 1868. For the knocking out of the tooth, see Joseph D. Thomas, and Marsha McCabe, ed., *Spinner: People and Culture in Southeastern Massachusetts*. Vol. IV (New Bedford, MA: Spinner Publications, Inc., 1988). 66.

CHAPTER VII

STAMPEDE OF SLAVES

As the 1850s wore on, slaveholders on the Eastern Shore of Maryland faced a complicated political, economic, and moral battle that was threatening the very foundations of the institution of slavery. Rising racial tensions and Northern abolitionist threats to the institution of slavery contributed to a reactionary response in Dorchester County that resulted in an ever more oppressive environment that was making life for black people, both free and enslaved, increasingly difficult. This repressive environment, however, also compelled more slaves to strike out for freedom, wreaking havoc on the stability and security of the white community. As Eastern Shore whites sought ways to control the black population, Tubman continued her efforts to liberate the rest of her family. Though her identity remained veiled from Eastern Shore whites who were probably not even aware of Tubman's role, each new mission placed her at greater risk of being discovered. Compelled by love and responsibility, though, she would not rest until she had the rest of her family with her safely in Canada.

Tubman, however, often faced severe restrictions on her ability to travel freely, to save money, and coordinate her missions to coincide with an opportune time to affect an escape, increasing the likelihood of failure. When Tubman was finally able to return to Philadelphia from Canada in September 1856, for instance, she discovered that her landlord had died during the summer. His widow had sold the house and left

Philadelphia for Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, taking Harriet's clothes and money with her. Thomas Garrett wrote to his friend and benefactor, Eliza Wigham, that Tubman had asked that Wigham kindly send "five pound sterling" to help her with her efforts, and to direct the funds to William Still's office in Philadelphia, where Tubman had assured Garrett she would be stopping, now that she had lost her rented room, whenever she was in Philadelphia.²

On September 12, an undeterred Tubman left Garrett's office for Baltimore to bring away two children. She told Garrett that once she returned she would make her way back to the Eastern Shore to make still another attempt to retrieve Rachel and Rachel's children from Dorchester County.³ On September 26, Garrett wrote Still to be on the lookout for five runaways from the Eastern Shore who had been sent along from his home earlier. Francis Molock, Cyrus Mitchell, Joshua Handy, Charles Dutton, and Ephraim Hudson had probably either left with Tubman or had used instructions provided by her.⁴ Tubman's illness throughout the summer had delayed their escape; in fact, Garrett had been waiting for Tubman to bring them on since May.⁵ Though it does not appear that she accompanied them on their escape, it seems likely that they had been waiting for her to help them. She may have organized their efforts, or she could have accompanied them just part of the way, preferring to remain close to the Eastern Shore or in Baltimore to embark on another mission of her own. Nevertheless, the five men were hurried on to New York and Canada after reaching Philadelphia.

One month later, however, Tubman did arrive in Wilmington with Tilly, a young woman whose lover had pleaded with Tubman to bring his fiancé away from Baltimore to Canada.⁶ Perhaps while in Baltimore to retrieve the two unnamed children, Tubman

sought out Tilly and pulled off one of her most complicated and clever escape attempts. Tubman arrived at Garrett's in Wilmington on October 20th with Tilly in tow. The story of Tubman's rescue so intrigued Garrett that he immediately sat down and wrote to Eliza Wigham. Eliza had just sent a five-pound note specifically for Harriet's use the week before her arrival at Garrett's place. In writing to Wigham again, Garrett's motives were no doubt financially driven, knowing that Wigham and her friends would send more money to support his, and Tubman's, efforts to help runaways.⁷ Tubman's latest adventure was, Garrett knew, just right to pique the interest of his English friends, while it also gave him the opportunity to promote and celebrate the attempts of "that noble woman, Harriet Tubman," whom he admired so greatly.⁸

Garrett told Wigham "the history of this trip was remarkable, and manifested great shrewdness."⁹ A fugitive living in Canada had left his fiancé in Baltimore some seven years before when he had to run away to avoid being sold south. He gave Harriet money, and in time, Tubman made her way to Philadelphia, where a steamboat captain gave her a certificate stating she was a resident of Philadelphia and a free woman. Traveling through the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal on this vessel, Tubman reached Baltimore and in time, found Tilly. Tubman was well aware that she could not bring a black woman from Baltimore to Philadelphia without paying a bond of \$500, or producing a certificate of freedom of some sort, neither of which Tubman had. Tubman, not to be deterred, purchased fares for passage on a steamboat bound south through the Chesapeake Bay to Seaford, Delaware, far up the Nanticoke River from Dorchester County. Eventually the captain of the steamboat, who knew the captain from the Philadelphia steamer, was convinced by Tubman to provide a travel pass or some other

certificate to Tilly to ensure her safe travel. Two black women traveling south did not raise much suspicion, and providing Tilly with a pass probably seemed harmless, or perhaps, the steamboat captain was an anti-slavery man.

In any case, Tubman and Tilly soon found themselves far south of Baltimore and even farther from free soil. Upon their arrival in Seaford, Tubman “boldly went to the Hotel & called for supper and lodging.”¹⁰ How restful their sleep was, Garrett did not report, though Tubman probably prayed through the night, seeking their safe deliverance north. In the morning they were confronted by a slave dealer who “attempted to arrest them.” Tilly was on the verge of hysteria – she was convinced they had been discovered - “but on showing the captain’s certificates,” they were allowed to pass. She told Sarah Bradford that she prayed, ““Oh, Lord! You’ve been with me in six troubles, *don’t* desert me in the seventh!” Meaning, presumably, this was her seventh trip.¹¹

They purchased tickets for the train through to Camden, Delaware, where William Brinkley, a local free black who had been befriended by Tubman some time before, and other Underground Railroad operators along the road, brought them by carriage the fifty miles to Wilmington. Garrett gave Tubman the \$25 that Eliza Wigham had sent for her. Tubman and Tilly both needed new shoes, but more importantly, Tubman needed at least \$20 to “go for her sister and children,” still waiting on the Eastern Shore.¹² Tilly was sent along to Canada, while Tubman immediately returned to Dorchester County. Garrett told Wigham that he was amazed that Tubman “does not know, or appears to not know that she has done anything worth notice.”¹³ Tubman cared more about success, not celebrity. She assured Garrett that she had great confidence that God would protect her

“in all her perilous journeys,” for she never went “on a mission of mercy without his consent.”¹⁴

Tubman had made arrangements to meet her sister, and had “one or more interviews with her,” but after waiting for ten days, her sister could not leave without her children, who were then living away from her.¹⁵ They planned then, that Tubman would return over the Christmas holidays and make another attempt at getting the whole family away. Her sister was hopeful that she and her children would be allowed to visit over the holiday, and they would make their bid for freedom then. Harriet gathered another group of eager freedom seekers, and headed north.

Tubman knew her latest charges, and probably fairly well. Josiah (Joe) Bailey and his brother Bill, Peter Pennington, and Eliza Manokey struck out with Tubman in mid November. Joe and his brother Bill had both been eager to run away. William Hughlett owned Joe, and Bill had been hired out to him; both brothers labored together in Hughlett’s timbering operations. A prominent planter who owned thousand of acres of farmland and timber along the Choptank River, and the owner of some forty slaves, Hughlett “was in the habit of flogging” his enslaved people, and when he whipped the Bailey brothers, they decided to run away.¹⁹ As a timber foreman who managed the harvesting and hauling of ship timber from Hughlett’s land along the Choptank River, Joe Bailey was well connected to the black maritime and shipbuilding networks in that region. Bailey knew Ben Ross and knew of Harriet’s forays into the neighborhood to help lead away her family and friends. Setting out from Jamaica Point in Talbot County on the Choptank River, one evening, Joe “took a boat and went a long distance to the cabin of Harriet’s father,” at Poplar Neck in Caroline County. There he told Ben to let

Tubman know he and his brother wanted to leave with her the next time she came through. Within a week or two, Tubman had arrived, and because of her sister's inability to leave, she was ready to take another party of fugitives north.²⁰ Joe and Bill Bailey probably contacted Peter Pennington, who labored for Turpin Wright at Wright's farm across the Choptank River from Bailey, at Secretary Creek, where Pennington may have operated a fishery of some sort, or in the fields. How Eliza Manokey came to join the party remains a mystery.²¹

Whatever the ease in coming together as a group, they faced serious obstacles in their escape North. They were hotly pursued. It took them nearly two weeks to reach Wilmington, a trip that had in the past taken Tubman only three or four days to complete. The slave catchers' persistent tracking of the group forced them to proceed slowly and remain hidden for a longer period than Tubman was used to. They hid in potato holes while the slave catchers passed within feet of them. They sought shelter with Rev. Sam Green in East New Market and were "passed along by friends in various disguises," where they were "scattered and separated" and led "roundabout" to a variety of safe meeting places while their pursuers relentlessly searched for them.

William Hughlett, who had only recently purchased Joe Bailey, posted runaway advertisements throughout the Eastern Shore of Maryland, offering an extraordinary reward of \$1,500 for the twenty-eight year old. Joe was a valuable and prized slave, obviously a skilled timber man whose services were vitally important to Hughlett's operations. Hughlett had paid close to \$2000 for Joe, and to have him run away so quickly after buying him must have infuriated him. Still, a \$1,500 reward seems excessive; Hughlett may have taken Bailey's escape as a personal affront and determined

to get him back at all costs. Perhaps Hughlett wanted to send a message to the slave quarters that he would go to great lengths to bring back any slave who ran away from him. John Campbell Henry, who owned Joe's older brother, Bill Bailey, offered a more typical reward of \$300 for his return, while Turpin Wright offered another high reward, \$800, for the capture and return of thirty year old Peter Pennington.²² Such high rewards increased substantially the danger of capture for the runaways.

Weaving their way northeast through Caroline County, following, perhaps, the Choptank River northeast past Denton and Greensborough, into Sand Town and Willow Grove in Delaware, near Camden, the party of freedom seekers relied heavily on the secret network of safe houses belonging to blacks and whites along the route. Near Camden, they probably sought shelter with Tubman's friends, William Brinkly and his brother Nat, and their neighbor Abraham Gibbs, where Tubman felt "safe and comfortable."²³ Gibbs and the Brinklys, active black Underground Railroad operators in this region of Delaware, probably brought Tubman and the group further north past Dover and Smyrna to Blackbird, where other Underground Railroad operators took charge of them and sent them over or around the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal to New Castle and other towns outside of Wilmington.²⁴

When they finally reached the outskirts of Wilmington, they discovered that Hughlett, Wright and Henry had arrived three days before, posting reward notices and hoping for news that the fugitives were near. Though the members of the black community followed these men around town and tore the reward notices down, the high reward offers had become common knowledge.²⁵ Police were patrolling all routes into the city, and there was no safe route to Thomas Garrett's house or store. So, they were

separated again, sent to wait at the homes of various black “friends” who sent word to Garrett that Harriet and the fugitives were seeking help to get across, probably the Market Street Bridge. Garrett engaged the services of a couple of black bricklayers, who loaded their wagon with bricks, and journeyed across the bridge in the morning, “singing and shouting,” greeting the police and others watching the traffic. The “bricklayers” located Harriet, Joe, Bill, Peter, and Eliza and loaded them into the wagon, concealing them in a compartment built into the wagon, beneath a strategically placed mound of bricks. Back they proceeded, still “singing and shouting,” passing undetected by the police and slave catchers waiting about the bridge.²⁶

One day later, on November 26, the party arrived in Philadelphia at Still’s office.²⁷ They were not safe, however, and it was imperative that they get to Canada as quickly as possible. On the 27th, they traveled by train to Oliver Johnson’s office in New York City, who then forwarded them by train to Albany and Syracuse.²⁸ The Fugitive Aid Society in Syracuse, however, had run out of money, and was able to forward the group only as far as Rochester, not as it customarily did directly to the Suspension Bridge at Niagara Falls. The Treasurer of the Syracuse Society, W.E. Abbott, sent them “to different half way houses that are on their route.”²⁹ Abbott wrote to Maria G. Porter, treasurer of the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, that this was just Tubman’s second trip through their office, indicating that she had managed to circumvent Syracuse’s main Underground Railroad station for most of her earlier trips to Canada.³⁰

Joe had been terrified for much of the trip. When he learned that runaway notices had been posted for their capture in New York, Joe “was ready to give up.”³¹ He grew silent, gripped with anxiety over the possibility of getting caught. As they approached

the Suspension Bridge, which spanned the Niagara River separating New York and Ontario, Canada, Tubman called out to her friends to look at the great falls. But Joe was inconsolable and would not look. When they reached the Canadian side of the bridge, Tubman shouted out, "Joe, you're free!" Overcome with relief, Joe's shouts of joy and singing drew a crowd. Praising God for his good fortune, Joe told Tubman the next trip he planned on taking would be to heaven. "You might have looked at the Falls first," Tubman replied, "and then gone to Heaven afterwards."³²

The fugitives settled in Ontario; Joe and his brother stayed in the St. Catherine's area, while Peter Pennington eventually made his way to Sarnia, in Lambton County on the west side of the province, near the Canadian border with Michigan.³³ What became of Eliza Manokey is not known. Joe became somewhat of a celebrity, both for himself and for Tubman. The fact that he was so highly valued a slave, that the reward was far greater than most, provided abolitionists on both sides of the border more dramatic stories for their lecture circuit and anti-slavery press. Reverend Hiram Wilson, who was then operating a relief operation in St. Catharines to aid the many fugitive slaves now fleeing across the border to Ontario, noted in his semi-annual report to Rev. Dr. Lathrop, secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, that these men were brought north by "a remarkable colored heroine" in one "of the many instances of her deeds of daring." The men, he wrote, were "of fine appearance and noble bearing," and the woman was "unusually intelligent and fine appearing... They manifested great joy & appeared truly grateful when relieved and furnished from our stores."³⁴

By this time, Tubman's reputation as "Moses" was taking shape. Her trips back and forth into slave territory inspired tremendous respect and awe from many people, white

and black, who came to know her. To some people, that she was a woman made her raids even more remarkable. Small in stature, neatly but often poorly dressed, with an understated modesty about her accomplishments, she seemed no different than anyone else, but she was different. Her head injury continued to plague her; headaches and lethargy often came upon her with no notice, and, during her rescues, she would occasionally drop off to sleep, jeopardizing the safety of her parties of runaways. But she never “lost a passenger,” and her friends and family marveled at her ability to run the “gauntlet of the most difficult parts of the Southern country.”³⁵ William Wells Brown, a prominent black author, went to Canada in 1860 and interviewed some of Tubman’s friends and family members who had fled North with her during the 1850s. They told him that Tubman had the “charm.” The “whites can’t catch Moses,” they told Brown, “cause you see she’s born with the charm. The Lord has given Moses the power.”³⁶ Tubman also believed she had the “charm,” her devout faith in God’s design and power through her gave her the strength and courage to carry on when the obstacles were nearly insurmountable, and all seemed lost.

After securing food and lodging for the Bailey brothers, Pennington, and Manoke, Tubman was supposed to return immediately to the Eastern Shore to try to bring away Rachel and her children, Ben and Angerine, over the Christmas holiday. Apparently Tubman did not make it back, for in March 1857, Thomas Garrett wrote to William Still that he had not seen her since the previous fall, when she had come through his office with Joe Bailey. “It would be a sorrowful act,” he wrote, “if such a hero as she, should be lost from the Underground Railroad.”³⁷ He expressed his concern again in a letter two days later to Mary Edmondson, Eliza Wigham’s sister, telling her, “I fear something has

happened to her.”³⁸ Still, however, wrote back later that day, informing Garrett that Tubman had just arrived in Philadelphia and that she was preparing for another trip south “this week.”³⁹

Garrett was worried for Tubman’s safety, more so than he had been in the past. Earlier in the month, on March 8, eight slaves from Dorchester County had escaped, but they were caught and trapped in Dover, Delaware. Henry Predeaux, Thomas Elliott, Denard Hughes, James and Lavinia Woolfley, Bill and Emily Kiah, and an unidentified eighth man had followed a route given them by Tubman.⁴⁰ She advised them to contact a black man, Thomas Otwell, then living outside of Dover, Delaware, who could guide them to the next stops on the Underground Railroad north to Wilmington.⁴¹ Otwell, who knew the Underground Railroad network in the Camden and Dover region, was also familiar with William Brinkley and his brother Nathaniel, who were active agents in the area. William Brinkly told Still that Otwell had “come with Harriet, a woman that stops at my house when she passes to and through you,”⁴² and therefore, he was highly trusted.

Otwell, however, “decoyed and betrayed” this group of eight runaways into the Dover jail. Revealing his role as an Underground Railroad operator to a local white man, James Hollis, Otwell conspired to trap the group coming through and claim the reward money estimated at nearly \$3000.⁴³ Otwell and Hollis approached Dover’s Sheriff Green and informed him of the plan to lead the unsuspecting runaways to the jail, where they were to be held, ostensibly, for protection for the night. On the evening of March 9th or 10th, Elliott, Predeaux, Hughes and their fellow fugitives, armed with knives and pistols, met up with Otwell, who for the sum of \$8.00 was to guide them from Milford, Delaware north to past Dover, a total of thirty miles. By four o’clock in the morning they neared

Dover, and Otwell took them to the jail and introduced them to Hollis who, they were assured, was a “great friend of the slaves.”⁴⁴ Hollis brought the cold and tired fugitives to the second floor jail cells, where, he assured them, they “would soon have a good warming.”⁴⁵ The moonlight shone through the barred windows, and Henry Predeaux became suspicious, commenting that he “did not like the looks of the place.”⁴⁶ The Sheriff, hoping to easily lock them in the room, was surprised to find them in the hallway, so he ran downstairs for his pistols. The runaways followed Green into his private quarters, waking Green’s wife and children. As the Sheriff reached for his pistols, Predeaux grabbed “a shovel full” of embers from the fireplace, scattering burning coals throughout the room and onto the beds.⁴⁷ With a red hot poker he smashed the window, and he kept the Sheriff back while the rest jumped out the window, dropping “twelve feet to the soft mud” below.⁴⁸ They scaled the wall sounding the jail and disappeared into the night. Predeaux, the last to make it out of the jail, “lost sight of his comrades,” and, as fortune would have it, was spared when the Sheriff’s pistol jammed as he tried to shoot him.⁴⁹

The group scattered. Predeaux made his way to Garrett’s house, while six of the others backtracked, “not knowing which way to run.”⁵⁰ They made their way back to Camden and within a short time overtook Otwell. Pleading for his life, Otwell promised he would take them to the next Underground Railroad station at William Brinkly’s, the place that he was originally supposed to take them to. Once there, Otwell disappeared, and Brinkley took charge of them. The Sheriff and a posse of slave catchers were on the lookout for the party, but could not obtain a warrant to enter the home where the fugitives were suspected of hiding. Somehow, the six were taken on to “Willow Grove, whence

they were forwarded by the forest roads.”⁵¹ Brinkly traveled as quickly as possible through Dover and Smyrna, “the two worst places this side of the Maryland line,” taking the runaways 19 miles to the next station, a round trip of 38 miles. It was “too much for our little horses,” he wrote Still.⁵²

Thomas Garrett was waiting in Wilmington, worrying that they would all be captured. The owners of three of the men were in town, looking and waiting for their arrival. Garrett sent word to the fugitives that they must keep from “crossing the bridges.”⁵³ Thomas Elliott and Denard Hughes may have been trying to get to the residence of Moses Pinket, Elliott’s uncle who lived in Wilmington.⁵⁴ Garrett, however, who had been watching the roads himself for several nights, found them on one of the roads near Wilmington, and brought them safely to his home.⁵⁵ Four more were met outside of the city by two men commissioned by Garrett, “with directions to cross the Christiana River in a boat,” and take them to another stop on the Underground Railroad, ten miles from Wilmington.⁵⁶ Eventually, five of the eight made it to William Still’s office, including James Woolfley, who became separated from his wife, and they were directed on to Canada and freedom. William and Emily Kiah, however, remained either in Delaware, Maryland, or Pennsylvania. They may have been waiting to bring away their daughter Mary, who they apparently had to leave behind.⁵⁷ Lavinia Woolfley was somehow separated from the group, though she did elude capture. Hiding out for several months, she successfully made it to Philadelphia, where she learned from William Still that her husband James was waiting for her in Canada.⁵⁸ The identity of the eighth runaway remains unknown, though he or she apparently found their way to Canada with the rest. What became of Otwell is not known. He did not, apparently, divulge the

names of some of his contacts on the Underground Railroad in the Dover area. The Brinklys continued, without significant interference, to operate an active Underground Railroad station there for several more years.

Garrett noted in his letter to Mary Edmondson in late March that this group of self-liberators, who came to be known as the Dover Eight, had come “from the immediate neighborhood” of Harriet’s “old Master.”⁵⁹ Pritchett Meredith, a wealthy and prominent farmer, whose land abutted the Brodess property in Bucktown, owned Thomas Elliott and Denard Hughes.⁶⁰ Meredith, Hughes later told Still, was “the hardest man around,” and his mistress, at eighty-three years of age, “drank hard,” and was “very stormy.”⁶¹ Elliott and Hughes knew Harriet and her family, and William and Emily Kiah probably did, too. Benjamin G. Tubman owned William Kiah, and Emily belonged to Ann Craig, a collateral member of the James Bushrod Lake family of Vienna.⁶² The “Hon. Ara Spence,” a prominent jurist who sat on Dorchester County’s district court, owned Henry Predeaux, who was twenty-seven years old and a “giant.”⁶³ Predeaux may have been hired out to the Bucktown area, possibly to Pritchett Meredith, though Predeaux believed that Spence was considering selling him “south.”⁶⁴

The news of the successful escape from the Dover jail spread through newspapers from Wilmington to Chatham, Ontario. Astonished that they were able to break away after being captured, abolitionists and Underground Railroad agents made the group a rallying cry. This infuriated Eastern Shore slaveholders. On April 14, 1857, a group of prominent Dorchester County slaveholders convened a hasty meeting to “devise means for a better protection of the [sic] slave property.” While the slaveholders were publicly decrying the loss of their slaves, police and white vigilante groups were determined to

find the “guilty” parties who were responsible for “exciting slaves to escape.”⁶⁵ The weather was exceedingly cold that April, destroying thousands of bushels of fruit, with major storms pelting freezing rain and hail, wreaking havoc on all the major crops on the Eastern Shore.⁶⁶ Farmers watched helplessly as nature destroyed their livelihood and their frustration was compounded by the insecurity of the human capital they were so invested in continued to run away. They could not control the weather, but they believed they had to find a way to control black people.

By mid-March, rumors were circulating that the Rev. Samuel Green, Tubman’s confidante and friend, and possibly relative, had played a role in the escape of the Dover Eight and presumably many other escapes. He had apparently been suspected before this, but he was so highly regarded in both the black and white community that he was able to deflect suspicions for some time. When it was discovered, however, that the Dover Eight “had passed in their flight immediately by his house, which stands near the road leading from Cambridge to the State of Delaware,” suspicions were aroused once again. On April 4, Sheriff Robert Bell arrived at Green’s house with a search warrant.⁶⁷ Green was promptly arrested when they found a “map of Canada,” letters from other runaway slaves living in Ontario, “six or eight schedules of a rail-road route through New Jersey,” a letter from Green’s son, Samuel Green Jr., who had fled from his owner, Dr. James Muse, some three years before, and a copy of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.⁶⁸

Once settled in Ontario, Sam, Jr., wrote to his parents, telling them news of his successful journey to freedom, which included “plenty of friends, plenty to eat, and to drink.” He told his father to tell Peter Jackson and Joe Bailey to “come on[e], come more.”⁶⁹ The letter, written September 10, 1854, preceded the escape of Peter Jackson,

who fled north with Harriet Tubman and her brothers over the Christmas holiday in 1854, a few short months after Sam had fled himself. Joe Bailey also ran away, with Tubman as his guide, during late November 1856. Adding to local whites' suspicions, Green had recently returned from a trip to Canada to visit his refugee son. The slaveholders felt assured, then, that Rev. Green had been involved in these and other escapes as well. When sufficient evidence could not be procured to convict Green for aiding and abetting specific slaves to run away from their masters, he was charged with illegal possession of material that could rouse feelings of "discontent" and dissatisfaction among the slaves. These charges were brought against Green as a violation of the Act of 1841, Chapter 272 which stated that if any free black "knowingly receive or have in his possession any abolition handbill, pamphlet, newspaper, pictorial representation or other paper of an inflammatory character," which could "create discontent amongst or to stir up to insurrection the people of color of this State, he or she shall be deemed guilt of felony," subject to a prison term of ten to twenty years.⁷⁰

Prosecutors tried to claim that the maps, railroad schedules, and letters from Green's son describing life in Canada were designed to create discontent among the slaves. The court acquitted Green though, ruling that those materials in and of themselves were not incendiary publications. New charges were lodged against him, citing his possession of Uncle Tom's Cabin, and this time he was convicted.⁷¹ Though local newspapers acknowledged that Green never would have been charged with this "crime" if he had not been under suspicion for aiding slaves to run away, they congratulated themselves for "testing the applicability of the Act" to Uncle Tom's Cabin.⁷² "The result is a practical commentary upon the insane efforts of abolition writers. Where can an instance be found

of real benefit having accrued to any slave by reason of the production of Mrs. Stowe's book! Until he was wrought upon by such publications, and by the more direct appeals of abolition emissaries, Green had lived quietly and contentedly in the community in which he was born and had the respect and confidence of all who knew him... There is no doubt of the fact that Green was instrumental, and had been for a long time, in the escape of slaves from this county."⁷³ The Reverend Sam Green represented what some slaveholders suspected and feared the most: a literate, well-respected, free black, who could move about and freely converse with whom he pleased and whose conversations may well have encouraged resistance to the slave system. It was because of this, and not just for aiding slaves in their struggle for freedom, that Green was really sentenced to ten years in the Maryland State Penitentiary, though officially it was for "having in his possession a certain abolition pamphlet called Uncle Tom's Cabin."⁷⁴

As Tubman started to make her way south from Philadelphia the first week of April 1857, she was probably aware of the tensions rising on the Eastern Shore and may have been well aware of the rumors and ultimate arrest of Rev. Sam Green. In Caroline County, Ben Ross had come under renewed suspicion of aiding slaves in their attempts to escape, and he was suspected of being involved in the flight of the Dover Eight. Ben had, in fact, sheltered "in his hut" the eight runaways from Dorchester County at the beginning of March.⁷⁵ Garrett thought that the original party of slaves was in fact nine, but that they had been "betrayed by one who started with the rest," who then "turned back and informed on the man who piloted them, and told where they went to stop over the first day," at Ben's house.⁷⁶

Ben and Rit were more than likely aware of their precarious situation. The authorities were preparing to arrest Ben, “when his master secretly advised them to leave.”⁷⁷ Dr. Anthony C. Thompson, who Ben would later criticize for his emotional cruelty, apparently suggested to Ben that he leave the state immediately. It took Tubman, however, some time to safely make her way down to the Eastern Shore; the increased vigilance of slave patrols, the loss of key Underground Railroad operatives she was dependent upon, and the unseasonably cold and stormy weather slowed her progress, making the journey more hazardous than ever. The urgency of her mission pressed her forward. By the end of May, with the weather more predictable and warm, Harriet was ready to take her parents north.

Ben and Rit were both in their seventies, and the prospect of journeying to Canada must have seemed daunting to them. Rit was not eager to go without her meager belongings, particularly her “feather-bed-tick,” and Ben wanted to bring along his prized broad axe.⁷⁸ Tubman took an “old horse, fitted out in primitive style with a straw collar, a pair of old chaise wheels, with a board on the axle to sit on, another board swung with ropes, fastened to the axle, to rest their feet on.”⁷⁹ Fleeing in the face of great danger, Tubman led her parents north to Wilmington. On June 4th Tubman arrived at Garrett’s house, where he provided them with \$30 and sent them along to William Still’s in Philadelphia. Though Ben and Rit were essentially free people, Still treated them as newly liberated slaves. There, finally on free soil, Ben and Rit told Still of deep sorrow over a “portion of their children had been sold to Georgia” and that they had been “stinted for food and clothing.”⁸⁰ Thompson, “a spare built man, bald head, wearing a wig,” was a “rough man towards his slaves,” Ben reported. He also complained that

Thompson “had not given him a dollar since the death of his [Dr. Thompson’s] father, which had been at least twenty years prior to Benjamin’s escape.”⁸¹ Still did not differentiate between Brodess and Thompson when he wrote down Ben and Rit’s story; he only mentions Dr. Thompson’s name, and in his haste he may have conflated the two masters into one, neglecting to note that Brodess had once been Rit’s owner. Oddly, Still neglected to note that they were Tubman’s parents.

Ben, Rit and Tubman most likely went on to New York City where Oliver Johnson and Jacob Gibbs would have tended to their needs. When they reached Rochester, Ben and Rit stayed with Maria G. Porter, the Secretary of the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society and a close associate of Frederick Douglass’s, for two weeks before moving onto St. Catharines where Ben and Rit’s sons, William Henry and John Stewart, several grandchildren and great-grandchildren were living.⁸²

Tubman did not stay with her parents in Canada; in fact, she may have left them with the Porters, knowing they would be safe and well cared for until one of her brothers could come for them from St. Catharines. Instead, Tubman returned to the Eastern Shore that summer to try again to retrieve her sister Rachel and her children. Rachel, who was separated from her children by some twelve miles, was probably hired out to another master somewhere in Dorchester County. By this time Angerine was ten years old, and Ben was eight, both old enough to be helpful and productive around the Brodess farm. But Tubman was again unsuccessful, and it appears that while she remained on the Eastern Shore for some time during that summer and fall, she did not bring away another party of slaves.

She did, however, help a large group of thirty-nine slaves make their own plans to run away together that fall.⁸³ During a three-week period in October 1857, over forty slaves ran away from masters in Dorchester County. Though a few runaways had taken flight during September, it was not until the early part of October that a wave of escapes threatened the stability white slave owners imagined they had created after the high profile imprisonment of Green and other Underground Railroad operatives in the area. Caroline Stanley, her husband Daniel, and their six children fled Dorchester County in early October with Nat and Lizzie Amby and several other adults in a group of about fifteen runaways. They passed through Norristown, Pennsylvania on the 18th and were forwarded to Still in Philadelphia by John Augusta.⁸⁴ With masters and slave catchers already on the lookout, another group, nearly twice as large, fled from their enslavers, heightening anxiety in an already tense community.⁸⁵

On the evening of Saturday, October 24, twenty-eight men, women and children snuck away from the homes of their masters, Samuel Pattison, Jane Cator, Richard Keene, Willis Brannock, Rueben E. Phillips, and Rev. Levi D. Travers.⁸⁶ Pattison, in fact, started his day with the shocking discovery that nearly all his slaves, fifteen in number, had “absconded” the night before, leaving him with no labor to operate his farm or, indeed, to cook his morning breakfast.

How such a large number of runaways successfully eluded capture remains a mystery. For two substantial groups of slaves to successfully escape from the same county in less than two weeks was an extraordinary achievement in itself. But that these two large groups of self liberators also brought away twenty children, several of whom were infants, makes their escapes all the more remarkable. Aaron Cornish and his wife

Daffney brought away six of their eight surviving children, including a two-week-old infant. The Rev. Levi D. Travers owned Aaron, but Daffney and six of her children were owned by Jane Cator and her stepfather, Rueben Elliot Phillips. Two more of the Cornish's children had to be left behind; young teenagers, they had been hired out to another master, making it difficult for Aaron or Daffney to retrieve them the night the rest of the family ran away.⁸⁷

Among the fifteen who absconded from Samuel Pattison that rainy night were two complete families. Susan Viney and her husband Joe (who was owned by a Virginia planter but hired out in Dorchester County) effectively brought away their four young children, Lloyd, Frank, Albert(a), and nine-month-old J.W., in addition to Joe's three older sons, Henry, Joe and Tom. Kit and Leah Anthony brought with them their three small children, Adam, Mary, and one-year-old Murray. Another slave, Joseph Hill, also owned by Pattison, was able to get away, bringing his free wife and son, Alice and Henry. The fifteenth slave Pattison lost that evening was Joseph Hill's sister, twenty-five-year-old Sarah Jane, who may have been hired off the Pattison plantation at the time she ran away with the rest; it was not until a few days after the escape that Pattison realized that she, too, was gone.⁸⁸

It rained heavily over the three days this group of runaways traveled the route to northern Delaware and on to Pennsylvania. Several adult male slaves joined this group of families; Solomon and George Light, Marshall Dutton, and Silas Long increased the number of freedom seekers to an astonishing twenty-eight runaways (excluding free Alice and son Henry).⁸⁹ They were heavily armed, carrying pistols, revolvers, knives and one "paw," a three-pronged weapon for "close combat."⁹⁰ The weapons indicated they

were not going to be captured without a fight. The escaping slaves found their way to Tubman's friend, William Brinkley, who, with his associates, brought the group from the Camden area to the outskirts of Wilmington. But they had been warned ahead of time to stay clear of the city. The news of the great escape had reached Wilmington, and Samuel Pattison, having learned that the fugitives were expected in the city, was following them and closing in quickly. In an all out effort to outrun Pattison and other slave catchers, Brinkley's carriage, "owing to fast driving with such a heavy load," broke down and his horse was severely injured.⁹¹ The fugitives were sick and hungry. Traveling in the cold rain for days, some of them barefoot, took a great toll on the children in particular. They were not able to rest or recuperate for long, however.

On the 31st, Thomas Garrett wrote Still, informing him that he had received word that twenty-seven of the runaways were outside the city, in Centreville, near the border on the road to Kennett, Pennsylvania. Part of the group, eighteen men, women, and children under the care of a black conductor named Jackson from Wilmington, had an altercation with "several Irishmen" who attacked the runaways with clubs. Garrett was not sure whether the Irishmen were "on the lookout" for the fugitives, or whether they were just "rowdies out on a Hallow-eve frolic."⁹² One of the runaways had used his revolver, shooting one of the Irish men in the forehead. The man survived, but the shooting increased the tension in an already stressful situation. A fourteen-year-old boy, probably one of the Cornish children, had been separated from the rest. He was barefoot, and there was great anxiety that he would be caught and perhaps inform on the rest.⁹³ The runaways had to be sent along as quickly as possible.

The fugitives were separated and sent to different operators outside of Philadelphia, as the city itself was then not safe for them. Some of the eighteen mentioned above were secreted at John and Hannah Cox's home at Longwood in Chester County, Pennsylvania.⁹⁴ Joe and Susan Viney and their children were sent on to Georgiana Lewis and Elijah Pennypacker outside of Philadelphia. Joe's older sons were sent on ahead while Susan, Joe and the younger children followed later.⁹⁵ Traveling through a blinding snowstorm in late November, the weary and frightened runaways were greeted by some of the worst weather to hit the Northeast and Central New York in years.⁹⁶ The Vineys, the Stanleys, the Cornishes, and many of the others, eventually made it to St. Catharines, Ontario, where they joined a growing number of their friends and neighbors from the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

On the Eastern Shore, in the meantime, a torrent of accusations and counter accusations were unleashed. Slaveholders and non-slaveholders were struggling to make sense of a world crumbling around them. On November 2, leading citizens and prominent slaveholders, including James A. Stewart, William Goldsborough, Samuel Hambleton, Dr. Francis Phelps, Dr. Horatio Grieves, and others, convened another slaveholder's meeting in Cambridge to "take into consideration the better protection of the interests of the slave owners."⁹⁷ Imagining a Northern conspiracy infiltrating their community with "abolition emissaries," Stewart and his fellow slaveholders passed resolutions calling for tighter restrictions on black people, but they struggled in vain to stifle the national media frenzy.⁹⁸ Their anger focused on the free black community, by whom they felt "greatly annoyed and injured" and who, they believed, were "agents of the 'negro worshipers' of the North."⁹⁹

Stewart had been elected as a Democratic Representative from Maryland in 1855. His fiery pro-slavery speeches on the floor of Congress marked him as a man with greater, and promising, national ambitions. The “negroe,” he argued, “is in his happy element on a sugar or cotton plantation, and in this condition will laugh to scorn the mistaken views of the Abolitionists to benefit him by placing him on a different theater,” Stewart scoffed at the vociferous criticism hurled at him from anti-slavery and moderate members of Congress.¹⁰⁰ He was comfortable in his role as representative of a strong coalition of powerful and conservative Southern states rights Democrats. And he appeared to be gaining the upper hand over his opponents, at least rhetorically, while enjoying a briefly exciting national reputation. Stewart had “measured lances with, and vanquished, the most powerful champions of abolition” in Congress, the editor of the *Easton Star* boasted in the fall of 1857. The newspaperman assured his readers that Stewart’s “sound national views” on slavery kept the “institutions of the South secure.”¹⁰¹

Little did Stewart and the rest realize, however, that the disabled slave they had known a few years before, who had run away and never come back, had become part of the vehicle that set in motion a sequence of events culminating in their national humiliation. Within the year, despite a harsh crackdown on the personal liberties of free and enslaved blacks, and even non-slaveholding whites, slaves in Dorchester County continued to run away in unprecedented numbers. Soon national newspapers were running articles mocking Eastern Shore slave owners, reporting that the “stampedes of slaves” from the area certainly did not support Stewart’s view of happy slaves.¹⁰²

The growing national attention only served to mobilize increased vigilance on the part of slaveholders on the Eastern Shore, making it impossible for Tubman to get her sister and her sister's children and bring them North to freedom. She eventually gave up and returned to Canada. Staying on the Eastern Shore was far too precarious now; the increased activity of slave patrols and the diligence of slaveholders created a climate of oppression and fear. With impunity they cast suspicions on many free blacks and some whites, creating a stifling and oppressive environment of terror and panic. Tubman could not be sheltered safely anymore. Tubman did not want to give up on her sister, but she had to stay clear of the Eastern Shore.

Nonetheless, even without Tubman's help, slaves continued to run away throughout December 1857 from many parts of the Eastern Shore and southern Delaware. Unfortunately, a group of seven runaways from Cambridge were caught in Caroline County as they were trying to make their escape in early January 1858.¹⁰³ Hannah Leverton's son, Arthur Leverton, and his free black neighbor, Daniel Hubbard, were immediately suspected. With tempers already at the breaking point, a white mob formed to forcibly carry the men to Cambridge with the intention of lynching them, but Arthur and Daniel received word of the mob's plans beforehand and made a run for Philadelphia.¹⁰⁴

Up and down the Eastern Shore, vigilante groups were meting out their own form of justice on those who they believed harbored and aided runaway slaves. In the June 1858, James Bowers was dragged by a "party of ruffians," (in fact local farmers and prominent members of the community) from his home outside of Chestertown in Kent County, Maryland, where he was beaten, stripped, tarred and feathered, and threatened with

hanging if he did not leave the county immediately. The noose around his neck, and the preponderance of guns and knives held by his abductors, convinced him to flee for Philadelphia, leaving his nine-month pregnant wife behind.¹⁰⁵ That same evening the mob committed the same “outrage” on a free black woman named Harriet Tillison, who was described as “dwarfish in appearance, scarcely weighing fifty pounds” and whose visits to the area supposedly preceded the escape of a number of slaves.¹⁰⁶ Tillison was not as lucky as Bowers; after her tar and feathering she was arrested and thrown in jail on charges of “preaching and circulating pamphlets of an incendiary character.”¹⁰⁷

In August 1858, another group of runaways from Dorchester County made an effort to break for freedom, but were betrayed by an informant, Jesse Perry, who set an ambush for them “seven miles above Greensborough” in Caroline County.¹⁰⁸ Their white conductor, Hugh Hazlett, was arrested and thrown into jail. When the steamer was transferring the eight fugitives, including Hazlett, to Cambridge, a large crowd gathered at the wharf. The Sheriff, fearful of a lynching, directed the steamer to disembark the fugitives at another location, thereby avoiding the angry and potentially murderous mob.¹⁰⁹

More slaveholder conventions were convened and planned in various communities throughout the Eastern Shore. Though the *Easton Star* condemned lynching, the editor argued, that given the diversity of opinion on the methods that might be used to stop the flood of runaways, a public slaveholders convention was not in the best interests of the Eastern Shore. He recommended that each slaveholder, and each community “keep strict watch over their respective neighborhoods” and avoid “constant discussion through the public journals” which proved to be “injurious to the institution of Slavery on this

Shore.” Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of saying “nothing more about it through [the press] and let an entirely private means be adopted to detect these aiders and abettors.” The newspaper decided to put the best face forward for the national media. Its editor continued to argue that slaves absconding from their masters was a “thing of rare occurrence,” as slaves on the Eastern Shore “met with more humane treatment” there than anywhere else, and that there “existed between master and slave that feeling of mutual confidence.” This had lasted until, of course, northern abolitionists and their “emissaries” had challenged the peace and serenity of their community.¹¹⁰

The timing could not have been worse for Sam Green, though. One hundred and fourteen ministers of the Black River Conference of the Methodist Church forwarded a petition to Governor Thomas H. Hicks, the former Dorchester County Registrar of Wills, asking for the release of Rev. Green.¹¹¹ If Hicks had been inclined to pardon Green, and there is no indication he was, the growing firestorm whipping up on the Eastern Shore made such a move politically impossible for him. With slaveholders looking around every corner for “northern fanatics” spreading “the evil influence of abolitionism,” Hicks could not have released Green without a tremendous outcry from his own community and constituents.¹¹² For Eastern Shore whites, the drama of a “stampede of slaves” out of Dorchester County, as local and national newspapers were wont to describe it, during the 1850s, was surpassed only by the Civil War itself.¹¹³

During the uproar in Maryland, and unable to return safely to retrieve her sister, Tubman became more involved in the relief activities in St. Catharines, aiding newly arrived fugitives and helping them settle into free lives there. She was now well known as “Moses” among the fugitive community in St. Catharines. She was often asked to help

bring away family and friends of other runaways, but she could no longer make plans for such missions. She channeled her energies into building and strengthening her network of black and white friends and supporters throughout Central New York and New England. Living on North Street, in a home once occupied by her brother William Henry and his family, and across the street from the newly built British Methodist Episcopal Church, Salem Chapel, in St. Catharines, Tubman became more active in the social, spiritual, and benevolent life of the community.¹¹⁴

Though Ben and Rit were reunited with their sons, friends and other family members, the journey north took a great toll on them. They suffered terribly that first winter (1857-58) and her mother complained to Harriet so much that, Bradford would later remark, Tubman's patience was "a lesson of trust in Providence better than many sermons."¹¹⁵ The cold winter weather, the loss of long time friends and family, and the unfamiliar landscape weighed heavily upon Rit.

Discouraged by her inability to return safely to the Eastern Shore, and financially and physically burdened with supporting her aged parents, Tubman channeled her frustrations into a more public and activist role in Northern abolitionist circles. Already the subject of great admiration from those who knew her, and the object of even greater speculation and awe on the part of those who did not, Tubman's courageous exploits garnered close attention from one of the most serious, and ultimately one of the most hated and celebrated abolitionists of all time: John Brown.

CHAPTER SEVEN NOTES

¹ Julius Sherrard Scott, III, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution." (Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University., 1986). 25

² James McGowan, Station Master on the Underground Railroad. (Moylan, PA: The Whimsie Press, 1977). 126-127. Letter Garrett to Eliza Wigham, September 12, 1856.

³ One of these two children in Baltimore may have been Margaret Stewart, a young child Tubman would later leave with William Henry Seward's sister-in-law, Lizette Worden, to raise in the Seward household in Auburn, NY. This child and her relationship to Tubman will be discussed later. Garret makes no further mention of the children, and Still has no record of Tubman arriving with any children during this time period..

⁴ "Journal C of Station 2 of the Underground Railroad (Philadelphia, Agent William Still)." Pennsylvania Abolition Society. Reel 32. Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, PA. September 28, 1856. See also, William Still, The Underground Railroad. (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., rpt. edition 1970). P 294. Francis Molock temporarily took the alias "Thomas Jackson." He had been owned by James Waddell. Molock settled in one of the northern most reaches of refugee settlement, in Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada. I am indebted to a relative of Molock's, Elaine McGill, for bringing this to my attention. Cyrus Mitchell, alias John Steel, had been owned by James K. Lewis. Joshua Handy, alias Hambleton Hambly, was owned by Isaac Harris. Charles Dutton, alias William Robinson, was owned by Mary Hurley, and Ephraim Hudson, alias John Spry, had been owned by John Campbell Henry. While most of these owners were from the Vienna area of Dorchester County, these slaves had been hired out to the Cambridge area, and thus, were in contact and able to make secret plans to get away together.

⁵ When Tubman came through Garrett's home in May with a party of four men, Garrett wrote to Still, "I shall expect five more from the same neighborhood next trip." Letter, Garrett to Still, May 11, 1856 in McGowan, Station Master. 93; Still, Underground Railroad. 402; and R.C. Smedley, History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania. (Lancaster, PA: John A. Hiestand, 1883). 367.

⁶ Garrett does not mention the name of this young woman in his letter to Eliza Wigham. Sarah Bradford, however, names Tilly in her second biography of Tubman, but the escape sequence is slightly different. I have concluded they are one in the same, and have relied on Garrett's rendition of the escape because he wrote it the same day it was told to him by Tubman. While Garrett purpose was to raise more money by telling Wigham the stories of the freedom seekers who came through his office, I believe Garrett

can be viewed as trustworthy and accurate to the extent possible. Though he may have confused some facts on occasion, he is generally quite reliable. Based on independent documentary evidence of other escapes described in his letters, Garrett's descriptions are very accurate. See McGowan, Station Master. Letter, Garrett to Wigham, October 34, 1856. 129-131.; and Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Sons, 1886). 57-59.

⁷ McGowan, Station Master. See especially 117-145.

⁸ McGowan, Station Master. Letter, Garrett to Wigham, October 24, 1856. 129-131.

⁹ McGowan, Station Master. Letter, Garrett to Wigham, October 24, 1856. 129-131.

¹⁰ McGowan, Station Master. Letter, Garrett to Wigham, October 34, 1856. 129-131.

¹¹ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 60. According to my estimates, this would have been her 9th trip, but by 1886 when Tubman relayed this story to Bradford, Tubman's exact memory of the event may have been vague as to which trip it was.

¹² McGowan, Station Master. Letter, Garrett to Wigham, December 27, 1856. 134-135.

¹³ McGowan, Station Master. Letter, Garrett to Wigham, October 34, 1856. 129-131.

¹⁴ McGowan, Station Master. Letter, Garrett to Wigham, Dec. 27, 1856. 134-138.

¹⁵ Thomas Garrett writes in his letter to Wigham that Tubman was there for a sister and the sister's three children. McGowan, Station Master. Letter, Garrett to Wigham, December 27, 1856. 134-138. Tubman's sister Rachel had two children, and her sister-in-law Mary Manoke had three children. I believe that Tubman may have been trying to get both sets of women and children away; however, by this date, Mary Manoke was pregnant with another child by another man, Walter Wells, who she later married. Their child, possibly Sally Wells, was born sometime in December 1856 or January 1857. Therefore, it is unlikely that Mary was going to go north at this point with a newborn child, who belonged to a man other than her first husband, Harriet's brother Robert Ross [John Stewart.] Anthony Thompson sold Mary Manoke and her four children, John Henry, Moses, and Ritty Ross, and Mary Wells, to his daughter Sarah Catherine Haddaway in Talbot County on March 16, 1857. See "Anthony C. Thompson to Sarah Catherine Haddaway." Dorchester County Chattel Records, 1851-1860. 1/4/4/45. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.. Therefore, I believe that Rachel is the last "sister" who Tubman is trying to get away to freedom.

¹⁹ "Journal C." November 26, 1856.

²⁰ Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 29

²¹ Eliza Manokey could have been related to the Manokeys enslaved by Thompson, and even enslaved by Thompson herself. She could have been freeborn as well, though she could have easily left the area on her own.

²² Still, Underground Railroad. 279-281. See also, "Journal C." November 26, 1856. Still records her name as "Nokey." No record of a reward for Eliza Manokey has been found, and Still made no notes concerning her owner or her life under slavery. Eliza undoubtedly knew Tubman and her family, and she may have been related to Jerry and Polly Manokey. In fact, she may have been owned by Anthony Thompson when he died. A young woman named Eliza was "awarded" to Absalom Thompson in Talbot County as part of the administration of Anthony Thompson's estate. She was to be free in 1856. What became of that Eliza is unknown, though the Eliza Manokey who ran away with the Baileys and Peter Pennington supposedly arrived from Easton, Talbot County.

²³ "The Underground Railroad: Manuscript Materials Collected by Professor Seibert, Ohio University." Vol. 40. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA.

²⁴ "Tubman Interview [Seibert]."

²⁵ Thomas Garrett says nothing of a reward offered for Harriet's capture. Bradford, however, inserts into her narrative of this escape that a reward offer for \$12,000 was posted for Tubman's capture. No reward notice for this sum, nor a notice for the capture of Tubman has ever been located. It seems likely that if such a reward was posted at this time, Garrett would have mentioned it, like he mentioned the rewards for the men.

²⁶ Bradford, Scenes. 31.

²⁷ "Journal C." November 26, 1856.

²⁸ McGowan, Station Master. 149. Letter, Thomas Garrett to Joseph Dugdale, November 29, 1856.

²⁹ Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society Records. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor, MI. Letter, W.E. Abbott to Maria G. Porter, November 29, 1856. 1:9. There are numerous places along the way from Syracuse to Rochester where Tubman and her friends could have found help. There were way-stations in Skaneateles, Auburn, Weedsport, Port Byron, Geneva, Sherwood, and other places directly on the western route to Rochester.

³⁰ "Records." Letter, W.E. Abbott to Maria G. Porter, November 29, 1856. 1:9.

³¹ Bradford, Scenes. 32-35.

³² Bradford, Scenes. 35.

³³ Ontario census, 1861, 1871, 1881. Also, Lambton County Library, Sarnia, vertical file, "Peter Pennington." Peter established himself as a fish dealer, probably a similar profession to his work tasks while enslaved for Turpin Wright, who owned a fishery at Vienna, on the Nanticoke River, and at Secretary on the Choptank River, both in Dorchester County.

³⁴ Semi Annual Report, Rev. Hiram Wilson, St. Catharines, Canada West, to Rev. Dr. Lathrop, Secretary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

³⁵ Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: J.J. Little & Co., 1901). 142. William Wells Brown, The Rising Son; or, the Antecedents and Advancement of the Colored Race rpt. 1874 ed. (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970). 536-539.

³⁶ Brown, Rising Son. 538. "De whites can't catch Moses, kase you see she's born wid de charm. De Lord has given Moses de power."

³⁷ McGowan, Station Master. 95; Still, Underground Railroad. 662.

³⁸ McGowan, Station Master. 139-143.

³⁹ McGowan, Station Master. 139-143

⁴⁰ William Still identifies Henry Predeaux as "Predo," Denard Hughes as "Daniel" Hughes. See Still, Underground Railroad. 57-60. Still identifies James and Lavinia Woolfley on page 161. Their name may actually be "Woolford," though their exact identity has not been determined. Bill and Emily Kiah are identified in a runaway advertisement, see Debra Smith Moxey, Newspaper Abstracts from the American Eagle and Cambridge Chronicle 1846-1857. (Cambridge, MD, 1995). American Eagle, March 18, 1857.

⁴¹ McGowan, Station Master. 95. Letter, Thomas Garrett to Samuel Rhodes, March 13, 1857.

⁴² Still, Underground Railroad. 60. Letter William Brinkley to William Still, March 23, 1857.

⁴³ "Unsuccessful Attempt to Capture Fugitive Slaves," *New York Tribune*, New York, March 20, 1857.

⁴⁴ McGowan, Station Master. 139-143. Letter, Garrett to Edmondson, March 29, 1857.

⁴⁵ Still, Underground Railroad. 58.

⁴⁶ McGowan, Station Master. 139-143. Letter, Garrett to Edmondson, March 29, 1857.

⁴⁷ Still, Underground Railroad. 58.

⁴⁸ McGowan, Station Master. 139-143. Letter, Garrett to Edmondson, March 29, 1857.

⁴⁹ Still, Underground Railroad. 58.

⁵⁰ "Unsuccessful Attempt."

⁵¹ "Unsuccessful Attempt."

⁵² Still, Underground Railroad. 60. Letter, William Brinkley to William Still, March 23, 1857. "We put them through, we have to carry them 19 miles and cum back the same night wish makes 38 miles. It is too much for our little horses... We have to go throw down and smother, the two worst places this side of Maryland line."

⁵³ McGowan, Station Master. Letter, Garrett to Mary Edmondson, March 29, 1857. 141.

⁵⁴ Pritchett Meridith, "\$600 Reward," *Cambridge Democrat*, Cambridge, MA, March 18, 1857.

⁵⁵ Meridith, "Elliot/Hughes Runaway Ad." Pritchett Meridith noted in his runaway advertisement for Elliott and Hughes that Elliott had a free uncle by the name of Moses Pinket living in Wilmington. Elliott and Hughes would not have been safe going to Pinket's; no doubt his residence was being watched. According to the 1850 U.S. Census for Wilmington, Moses Pinket was living in the household of Enoch Mortimer Bye, a Quaker merchant. Bye was intimately linked to Thomas Garrett through business and social contacts, and he had familial and business connections throughout Chester Co., and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Bye was probably active on the Underground Railroad, though as of this writing no documentation has surfaced to suggest this. Bye was related, through his mother, to Dr. Jacob Paxon, one of the more famous Underground Railroad operators in Norristown, PA. Bye's wife, Phebe Pusey Passmore, also a Quaker, had strong anti-slavery and Underground Railroad connections in Pennsylvania and Delaware. See McGowan, Station Master. 56; see also, Smedley, Underground Railroad. (, and William Kashatus, Just over the Line: Chester County and the Underground Railroad. (West Chester, PA: Chester County Historical Society with Penn State University Press, 2002).

⁵⁶ McGowan, Station Master. 139-143. Letter, Garrett to Edmondson, March 29, 1857.

⁵⁷ William Still records William and Emma "Chion" [Kiah] coming through his office in 1860. See Still, Underground Railroad. 543. They changed their last name to Williams,

and they settled in Ontario for a few years before moving to Auburn, New York to live near Harriet Tubman. See Ontario 1861 Census, St. Catharines; and Auburn, NY, 1865 census, where they are listed with their daughter Mary. In 1865 they are listed as servants in the household of Mrs. George Underwood, widow, who was a friend and supporter of Tubman.

⁵⁸ Still, Underground Railroad. 160-161. Lavinia arrived in Still's office with another woman from Dorchester County named Ann Johnson. Ann's brother William, or Winnibar, had fled their owner, Samuel Harrington of Cambridge, in June 1854. After William had run away, Ann was sold to William Moore, of Bohemia Manor in Cecil County. The close proximity of this location to where Lavinia had been hiding probably accounts for the two women coming together. These sorts of connections point to a highly evolved and organized Underground Railroad network in this region.

⁵⁹ McGowan, Station Master. 139-143. Letter, Garrett to Edmondson, March 29, 1857.

⁶⁰ Pritchett Meridith posted a reward notice for \$600 for the return of "Denard Hughes and Tom Elliot," on March 11, which was published on March 18. See Meridith, "Elliot/Hughes Runaway Ad." William Still recorded their owner as "Richard" Meredith. Still, Underground Railroad. 58-59.

⁶¹ McGowan, Station Master. 59.

⁶² William and Emily Kiah would later settle in Auburn, New York, under the name "Williams," with their daughter Mary. They were employed as house servants in the home of George Underwood, a friend of Tubman's and a prominent figure in Auburn's social, political and economic life. The runaway notice posted in the *American Eagle*, March 18, 1857, noted that Emily was owned by "Mrs. Ann E. Craig." Still recorded in his book that Emily, or Emma, was owned by "Bushong Blake." Ann Craig was James Bushrod Lake's mother-in-law. Craig died in 1849, and she bequeathed Emily to her daughter, Louisa H. Lake, James's wife. Their daughter, Mary, presumably was bequeathed to William A. Lake, Louisa and James's son. See Leslie and Neil Keddie, Dorchester County, Maryland, Wills. Liber Lk No. 1, November 1861-1868, Folios 209-428. (Salisbury, MD: Family Tree Bookshop, nd.). 6-7.

⁶³ Moxey, Abstracts. *American Eagle*, March 18, 1857. 72.

⁶⁴ Still, Underground Railroad. 57-58.

⁶⁵ "A Negro Case," *Baltimore American*, Baltimore, MD, May 1, 1857.

⁶⁶ *Baltimore American*, Baltimore, MD. April 21, 22, 23, 1857.

⁶⁷ "Sam Green and Uncle Tom's Cabin," *Easton Gazette*, Easton, MD, August 28, 1858. See also, Richard Albert Blondo, "Samuel Green: A Black Life in Antebellum Maryland" (Masters, University of Maryland, 1988). 24.

⁶⁸ "Easton Gazette 8/28/1858."

⁶⁹ Blondo, "Sam Green". 21-22. Transcribed letter, Green, Jr., to Green, Sr., Sept. 10, 1854. The actual quotes are: "plenty of friends plenty to eate plenty to drink," and "tell P. Jackson to come on Joseph Baley com on, Kom more."

⁷⁰ "Easton Gazette 8/28/1858."

⁷¹ "Easton Gazette 8/28/1858."

⁷² "Easton Gazette 8/28/1858."

⁷³ "Easton Gazette 8/28/1858."

⁷⁴ "Prisoner # 5146 Samuel Green Free Negro." Maryland Penitentiary Records - Prisoner Records. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.. For a full account of the Rev. Sam Green's story, see Blondo, "Sam Green". See also, Still, Underground Railroad. 251-255.

⁷⁵ McGowan, Station Master. 143-145. Letter, Thomas Garrett to Mary Edmundson, August 11, 1857.

⁷⁶ It is not clear whether Garrett has this part of the escape sequence correct, nor does he mention who this ninth person may have been. William Camper, a free black living in Bucktown was arrested and convicted during the same court session Sam Green was being tried (April, 1857.) He was sentenced to four years in the state penitentiary for "stealing 94 cents, 1 bag and two handkerchiefs," a very stiff sentence for such a petty crime. It may have been a trumped up charge used to circumvent trying him for aiding and abetting the Dover Eight to run away. "William Camper, Free Negro." Maryland State Penitentiary Records, Prisoner Records. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.. Sarah Bradford wrote that the wife of the intended freedom seeker who turned back, hoped to "curry favor with her master" and betrayed the plan to him. Bradford, Scenes. 48.

⁷⁷ McGowan, Station Master. Letter, Thomas Garrett to Mary Edmundson, August 11, 1857. Bradford says that Ben had already been arrested, but Garrett makes no mention of this. I am taking Garrett's version of the event over Bradford's.

⁷⁸ Robert W. Taylor, Harriet Tubman: The Heroine in Ebony. (Boston: George E. Ellis, Printer, 1901). 9

⁷⁹ Bradford, Scenes. Letter, Thomas Garrett to Bradford, June, 1868. 52.

⁸⁰ Still, Underground Railroad. 411.

⁸¹ Still, Underground Railroad. 411. Ben was referring to Anthony Thompson, Dr. Anthony C. Thompson's father.

⁸² "New York." The Underground Railroad: Manuscript materials collected by Professor Siebert. US 5278.36.25. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. Letter, Mrs. C. Bloss Webb to Siebert, Sept. 7, 1896.

⁸³ Bradford, Scenes. 25 "At one time she collected and sent on a gang of thirty-nine fugitives in the care of others, as from some cause she was prevented from accompanying them."

⁸⁴ Still, Underground Railroad. 100. Daniel Stanley was owned by Robert Callender, but Caroline and the children were owned by Samuel W. Le Compte, who was also the former enslaver of Joseph Cornish who had run away in December of 1855. Nat Amby was held by John Muir but Elizabeth Amby was owned by Alexander Bayley. Nat and Lizzie later settled in Auburn, New York, while the Stanley's settled in Canada. Caroline and one of the children, possibly an unidentified infant, did not survive long. They were not listed as part of the Stanley household in Ontario by 1861 and Daniel was listed as a widow.

⁸⁵ For a complete list of names of the runaways during the month of October 1857, see Kate Clifford Larson, Bound For the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Heroine. (New York: Ballantine Books, forthcoming December 2003.)

⁸⁶ "Negro Stampede," *Cecil Whig*, Elkton, MD, October 31, 1857. The article says one of the owners was William D. Travers, but William was actually deceased. The Rev. Levi D. Travers was a nephew who had married one of William's daughters, and therefore had inherited some of William's slaves. Mrs. Jane Cator may actually be "Miss" Jane Cator, the step-daughter of Rueben Elliot Phillips. Phillips was married to Elizabeth Cator, Jane Cator's mother. Jane Cator's and Phillips's slaves, however, lived in the same household, although their ownership was separate.

⁸⁷ Still, Underground Railroad. 88-89.

⁸⁸ Still, Underground Railroad. 90-91.

⁸⁹ Marshall Dutton was probably related to Charles Dutton who had run away the previous fall.

⁹⁰ Still, Underground Railroad. 87.

⁹¹ Still, Underground Railroad. 663. Letter, Garrett to Still, Nov. 17, 1857. See also, Still, Underground Railroad. 467, Letter Brinkly to Still, June 13, 1858.

⁹² Still, Underground Railroad. 663. Letter, Garret to Still, Nov. 5, 1857. See also Smedley, Underground Railroad. 276-277. Smedley reported that the Irish man was stabbed, not shot, and that he died later in Centreville.

⁹³ Still, The Underground Railroad. 100. Letter, Garrett to Still, October 31, 1857.

⁹⁴ Smedley, Underground Railroad. 273-274, 276-277.

⁹⁵ Still, Underground Railroad. 101. Letter G. Lewis to William Still, Nov. 6, 1857. See also, Smedley, Underground Railroad. 365, letter, E. Pennypacker to Still, Nov. 7, 1857.

⁹⁶ "St. Catharines," *New York Tribune*, New York, November 23, 1857. "The Storm," *New York Tribune*, New York, November 24, 1857.

⁹⁷ Still, Underground Railroad. 99.

⁹⁸ "Easton Gazette 8/28/1858." In this article on the imprisonment of Sam Green, the editor quotes a an article from the *New Bedford Mercury*, which called Maryland "tyrannical" for sending Green to prison for possessing a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Furthermore, the editor of the *Easton Gazette* suggested that the Eastern Shore slaveholders keep their business out of the newspapers, as such reporting was "injurious to the institution of slavery." See also, "Abolitionists in Maryland," *The National Era*, Washington, D.C., November 25, 1858.

⁹⁹ "Free Negroes," *Annapolis Gazette*, Annapolis, MD, March 18, 1858.

¹⁰⁰ "Powers of the Government of the United States-Federal, State, and Territorial. Speech of Hon. James A. Stewart, of Maryland on African Slavery, Its Status-Natural, Moral, Social, Legal, and, Constitutional; and the Origin, Progress, Present Condition, and Future Diversity of the United States, Considered in Connection with African Slavery as a Part of Its Social System; with the Bearings of That Institution Upon the Interests of All Sections of the Union, and Upon the African Race." Delivered in the House of Representatives, July 23, 1856. Congressional Globe Office. Washington, D.C.

¹⁰¹ "The Democratic Congressional Convention," *Easton Star*, Easton, MD, September 1, 1857.

¹⁰² See "Slave Laws of Maryland," *The National Era*, Washington, D.C., March 24, 1859. ; and, "Political Intelligence," *The National Era*, Washington, D.C., June 30, 1859.

¹⁰³ "Capture [January 9, 1858]," *Easton Gazette*, Easton, MD, January 9, 1858.

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth Carroll, Quakerism on the Eastern Shore. (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1970). 143-144. See also, William T. Kelley, "Underground R. R. Reminiscences [April 2, 1898]," *Friends' Intelligencer*, April 2 1898. ; and William T.

Kelley, "Underground R. R. Reminiscences [May 28, 1898]," *Friends' Intelligencer*, May 28, 1898. Daniel Hubbard apparently lost everything. A local farmer owned Hubbard's wife and children, but Daniel had been saving to buy their freedom. He had his own home and was employed as a ship carpenter, but had to leave everyone and everything behind when he fled with Arthur Leverton. Leverton's family sold their home and joined him in Philadelphia immediately after the incident. They moved on to Indiana. Interestingly, Dr. Anthony C. Thompson's son, Anthony, who had married Arthur Leverton's sister, Mary, also moved to Indiana with the rest of his wife's family. She died there in 1859.

¹⁰⁵ "Lynch Law in Maryland," *Liberator*, Boston, MA, July 8, 1858. See also, "[Bowers]," *Easton Gazette*, Easton, MD, July 3, 1858. Jesse Perry was identified in a letter, Thomas Garrett to William Still, August 21, 1858. See McGowan, *Station Master*. 101-102; and Still, *Underground Railroad*. 497.

¹⁰⁶ "Foul Outrage," *Liberator*, Boston, MA, July 8, 1858.

¹⁰⁷ "Suspicious," *The Public Monitor*, Easton, MD, July 8, 1858.

¹⁰⁸ "Capture [August 7, 1858]," *Cecil Whig*, Elkton, MD, August 7, 1858. Several of these slaves belonged to Rueben E. Phillips, who along with his step-daughter Jane Cator, had already lost seven of their slaves with the large party of twenty eight which fled in October, 1857.

¹⁰⁹ "Negroes Captured," *Easton Gazette*, Easton, MD, August 7, 1858. "Excitement at Cambridge," *New York Tribune*, New York, August 7, 1858. Hazlett broke out of jail shortly thereafter, but was apprehended in east New Market. He was tried and convicted and sent to the Maryland Penitentiary for forty-four years. See "Escape and Recapture," *Easton Gazette*, Easton, MD, October 16, 1858. , and "Trial of Hugh Hazlett," *Easton Gazette*, Easton, MD, November 20, 1858. See also, "Prisoner # 5324 Hugh Hazlett." Maryland Penitentiary Records - Prisoner Records. MDSA. Annapolis, MD.. Hazlett was pardoned, Dec. 21, 1864, after Maryland freed its slaves (Nov. 1, 1864.)

¹¹⁰ "Easton Gazette 8/28/1858."

¹¹¹ "Easton Gazette 8/28/1858."

¹¹² "Easton Gazette 8/28/1858." Green would remain imprisoned until 1862, when Maryland's newly elected Governor, Francis Thompson King, pardoned Green and ordered him to leave the state. See Blondo, "Sam Green", 63-72 for what happened to Green and his wife after they fled Maryland in 1862.

¹¹³ "Cecil Whig, Stampede."

¹¹⁴ Harriet Tubman is listed in the St. Catharines Assessment Roll (St. Paul's Ward), 1858. William Henry is listed in the St. Catharines Assessment Records (St. Paul's Ward) for 1856 at this same address. Brother John Stewart was listed in 1856 around the corner on Niagara St, in a building owned by the same landlord, Joseph Robinson. William Henry and a brother, possibly James, had rented land to try their hand at farming, probably around 1857-8, when Tubman returned to St. Catharines and took over the responsibility of taking care of their parents, Rit and Ben. Having failed at farming, William Henry returned to St. Catharines, and he is listed there in the 1861 census. He purchased six acres later that year in Grantham, Lincoln County, west of St. Catharines, and he remained there, with his family, for decades. See also, John W. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977). 416. ; and St. Catharines Census, 1861, District 5., pg. 72;

¹¹⁵ Bradford, Scenes. 80

ASANTI DAUGHTER OF ZION: THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF HARRIET
TUBMAN

Volume II of II

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CHAPTER VIII

MOSES MEETS JOHN BROWN

For Harriet Tubman, daily struggle did not end when she left Dorchester County. Like the thousands of refugees who fled north for a chance at a free life, liberty did not guarantee food, clothing, and housing. The daily work of survival continued and often required the communal efforts of family, friends, and supporters to keep freedom seekers alive. The arrival in St. Catharines of over forty runaways from Dorchester County in the late fall of 1857, for example, required a tremendous relief effort on the part of the refugee community. Scrambling to provide shelter, clothing, fuel, and food to the weary and weak families taxed an already poor community. Southern blacks often came ill prepared for the long, cold winters. Many suffered from respiratory illnesses when they first arrived; inadequate food, clothing and housing exacerbated the problems. William Cornish, for example, who arrived in the fall of 1856, fell ill for several months. After his wife, Delia, followed him to Canada in December 1856, she also became very sick; William, already weak himself, spent “three weeks... just [turning] her over in bed.” By 1863, three of their six children were dead.¹

It likewise proved difficult to find steady work. Depending upon the season, and the connections fugitive slaves could make upon arrival, work options varied dramatically. Agricultural work throughout Canada West attracted thousands of former plantation slaves. But the shorter growing season made for difficult times, however, through the

long winters. High rents, low agricultural prices, and the tactics of some unscrupulous Canadians made independence difficult for some runaways to achieve. Several planned and segregated communities were founded throughout Canada West, supported by organizations such as the American Missionary Association or other like-minded organizations, to help former slaves rebuild their lives and develop economic and agricultural resources. In these all black cooperative settlements, land was sold to former slaves, who then timbered and then cultivated it, creating small functioning communities. Though some of these communities and land cooperatives remained dependent upon charitable contributions and support to keep them running, their efforts did help some refugees build new lives in freedom.²

Tubman became actively involved in relief activities in St. Catharines; she “watched over their welfare, collected clothing, organized them into societies, and was always occupied with plans for their benefit.”³ To carry out this work, she turned to the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, among other organizations, for support. In 1857-58 the Rochester society highlighted Tubman’s rescue of “about fifty persons,” in their annual report, providing a fresh new face of slavery for the thirsty anti-slavery readers and donors anxious for personal stories to justify their monetary support.⁴ The Society conducted Anti-Slavery Fairs and collected clothing and food to pass along to Canada, helping to ease Tubman’s and the other fugitives’ burdens.

Newly arrived former slaves also struggled with discrimination, prejudice and racism. Many cities and towns refused to educate young black children, for instance, in integrated classrooms, forcing black communities to establish, staff, and fund private segregated schools. In some ways, the situation in Canada was little different from that

in the Northern states. In Canada, however, blacks enjoyed political liberties not often shared by African Americans in the Northern United States. Under Canadian law, blacks were guaranteed the same rights as whites; they could vote, serve as jurors, testify in court, own property, and run for political office. Racism and discrimination tempered the enjoyment of those rights, but for many former slaves who had fled from the South, a life of freedom and relative independence in Canada far outweighed the myriad of prejudices and indignities they faced in the North.⁵

On the whole, however, many freedom seekers eventually found work and stability once they arrived in Canada. In St. Catharines, runaways from Dorchester County found ready employment, as day laborers, servants, coachmen, farmers, cooks, waiters, blacksmiths, painters, and barbers, and at least one, Joseph Cornish, became a full-time minister. While some of the Eastern Shore's runaways who journeyed to Canada settled in other Ontario communities such as Sarnia, Chatham, and Owen Sound, many remained in St. Catharines. There they recreated the familial and social relationships and networks they had established in Dorchester County. St. Catharines Assessment records, rent rolls and census records reveal a tightly knit community of Eastern Shore runaways living within a several block radius of North Street where Tubman's brothers, John and William Henry Stewart, and her parents settled for a time during the mid-to-late 1850s. Several fugitive families also settled in Grantham, on the outskirts of St. Catharines; William Henry and his family settled on seven acres of land there in 1861, where they were joined by the Stanleys, the Anthonys, Thomas Elliott, and his brother Abraham, among others.⁶

Some of the Eastern Shore's runaways also settled in Auburn, New York, and probably other Central New York communities as well. Nat Amby and his wife, Lizzie,

settled in Auburn after they had successfully eluded pursuit with the other twenty-six runaways who had fled Dorchester County in October 1857. Nat Amby, writing from Auburn, NY, in August 1858, told William Still that he and Lizzy were doing well, but that he was eager to communicate with his brothers, Joseph and Henry Amby, and a cousin, Ann Warfield, whom he apparently had left behind. He asked Still to write to Affey White of Strawberry Alley, a black woman (possibly a relative) then living on the waterfront in Baltimore, and ask her to inquire of the brothers, and to inform Nat's mother, "Sichy," that he was safe and "performing" his religious obligations. Living in a small black settlement known as New Guinea, on the east side of Auburn running along the Owasco River, Nat and Lizzie found support and shelter with P.R. Freeman, a descendent of one of the very first black families to settle in Auburn.⁷ Some of the runaways who fled the Eastern Shore during the late fall of 1857 had apparently been directed through Auburn on their way to Rochester and Canada by way of Albany and Syracuse. Whether these Dorchester County fugitives settled in Auburn because of Tubman's relationships with Auburn abolitionists Martha Coffin Wright and her husband David's law partner William H. Seward, among others, is not known. Tubman more than likely became close to Martha Coffin Wright through Wright's sister, Lucretia Coffin Mott of Philadelphia, a long-time Tubman friend and supporter. Tubman's knowledge of and use of Central New York's Underground Railroad network also would have led her to Auburn and the black and white families who sheltered and aided freedom seekers running through the Finger Lakes region. Though this was not a main branch of the underground, an estimated 500 fugitives passed through the area during the thirty years prior to the Civil War.⁸ Irrespective of the reasons the Ambys and others settled in

Auburn before the war, Tubman had already developed a solid network of black and white abolitionist supporters and admirers there, whom she learned to turn to when in need, and who obviously were ready to shelter and aid runaways coming through the community.

It was this network that brought Tubman in contact with the legendary John Brown, a zealous and militant freedom fighter and anti-slavery activist destined to martyrdom in a failed attack on Harper's Ferry, Virginia in 1859. In early January 1858, Tubman spent a few days with Frederick Douglass and his wife Anna Murray at their home in Rochester. Tubman had "been spending a short time with us since the holidays," Douglass wrote the Ladies' Irish Anti-Slavery Association. Hoping to solicit more funds to help with the Underground Railroad operations in Rochester, Douglass told them Tubman "escaped from Slavery some eight years ago, has made several returns at great risk, and has brought out, since obtaining her freedom, fifty others from the house of bondage." Tubman possessed "great courage and shrewdness," Douglass wrote, "and may yet render even more important service to the Cause."⁹

Douglass, in fact, may have been the initial connection between Tubman and John Brown. Perhaps he suggested Tubman as a possible recruiter and practical guide who could help Brown in his scheme to lead an insurrection in the south and establish a new free state for liberated slaves in the mountains of Virginia and western Maryland. Perhaps the one white person Tubman most admired was John Brown. During the winter and spring of 1858, Brown was advised by the prominent abolitionists and Underground Railroad operators Frederick Douglass, Gerrit Smith, and Jeremiah W. Loguen to travel to St. Catharines, Ontario, where Tubman was then living with other fugitive slaves.

Brown had heard a great deal about the extraordinary woman who had made several successful forays and rescue missions to the Eastern Shore. He hoped that her expert knowledge of the communication and transport lines on the Underground Railroad might be used to his advantage during his planned assault on Harper's Ferry to liberate slaves and strike a fatal blow to slavery.

Brown visited with Douglass at the end of January, after Tubman had left, spending a week discussing his plans and then writing a draft constitution for a provisional government for his visionary state for newly freed slaves. From Rochester, Brown moved on to Gerrit Smith's house in Peterboro, where he stayed a few days to try to convince Smith of the viability of his plan for an armed attack in Virginia. Smith was one of Brown's "Secret Six," a group of supporters (mostly from the Boston area) who knew of Brown's secret plans for an armed raid and who provided funds and connections for Brown. Though Frederick Douglass was not one of the "Secret Six," he was intimately involved in the plot; Brown had hoped to get Douglass's full support for his scheme, but Douglass ultimately believed that Brown's plans were doomed to fail.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Tubman was well known to Douglass and Smith, and it was through them that Brown met her and recruited her for his mission of liberation.¹¹

After staying with Smith for a short period in February, Brown headed to Boston with Franklin Sanborn, a writer, schoolmaster, and active abolitionist. Sanborn had come from his own home in Concord, Massachusetts, to confer with Brown about his plans and to ready him for meetings with other prominent, well-connected and wealthy abolitionists in the Boston area. Brown desperately needed funds for himself, his family, and his campaign. Staying at Sanborn's residence in Concord, Brown made the rounds of

selected abolitionist homes, soliciting money and raising interest in his scheme to incite rebellion among the slaves in a then-secret border state. It was here, in Boston, that the decision to launch the attack on Harper's Ferry, Virginia was finally made with the approval of Brown's secret support committee, though the timing and exact location remained undetermined and secret, even from many of Brown's supporters who offered money and arms for the raid.¹²

Through introductions made by Douglass, Smith, and the Rev. Jeremiah W. Loguen, the prominent and active Underground Railroad stationmaster in Syracuse, N.Y., Brown met with Tubman in early April 1858 to discuss recruiting former slaves, then living in Canada, to join the small band he would lead on his raid.¹³ He believed her crucial knowledge of terrain in Maryland and Pennsylvania would be critical to conducting a successful attack.¹⁴ Though Harper's Ferry was in unfamiliar territory for Tubman, her expertise in traversing the border, her uncanny ability to move about undetected, and her familiarity with clandestine black communication networks, would be valuable to any operation Brown was planning.

"I am succeeding in all appearance, beyond my expectations," Brown wrote his son enthusiastically on the 8th.¹⁵ He had met Tubman the day before in St. Catharines; their meeting had gone so well that Brown considered her a true revolutionary. Referring to her as "General," Brown quickly recognized her great intelligence.¹⁶ "*He* is the most of a *man*," Brown wrote, "that I ever met with."¹⁷ Blurring the gender conventions of the time, Brown recognized Tubman's leadership abilities – a quality he would have considered masculine - from the beginning. The respect and admiration Tubman commanded in St. Catharines' fugitive community, her seemingly tireless and persistent

battle to free her friends and family from enslavement on the Eastern Shore, and her obvious enthusiasm for Brown's scheme, defined the type of "man" Brown was looking for to accompany him on his attack. He deeply admired her own sacrifices, her determination to act on principle, her fearless military-like strategies for infiltrating enemy territory, and her deep religious faith. To Brown, Tubman was a doer; acting on her convictions and risking her life like few others, she stood apart from most men Brown knew.

Tubman claimed that she had had a vision of Brown before she met him. "She laid great stress on a dream which she had just before she met Captain Brown in Canada,"

Sanborn wrote,

She thought she was in 'a wilderness sort of place, all full of rocks and bushes,' when she saw a serpent raise its head among the rocks, and as it did so, it became the head of an old man with a long white beard, gazing at her 'wishful like, jes as ef he war gwine to speak to me,' and then two other heads rose up beside him, younger than he, -- and as she stood looking at them, and wondering what they could want with her, a great crowd of men rushed in and struck down the younger heads, and then the head of the old man, still looking at her so 'wishful.' This dream she had again and again, and could not interpret it; but, when she met Captain Brown, shortly after, behold, he was the very image of the head she had seen. But still she could not make out what her dream signified.¹⁸

Tubman's respect and admiration for Brown overshadowed any doubts her subconscious warning that seemed to surface in her dream. He was unlike any white man she had met, and their mutual admiration and respect both elevated Brown's stature among the fugitive community and likewise raised Tubman's own stature in white anti-slavery circles. Brown entrusted her with organizing a band of fugitive slaves willing to fight along with him, hoping that she, too, would be at his side when the attack came. Rev. Loguen had accompanied Brown to St. Catharines, and it was he who set up the

meeting between the two on April 7. Brown was cautious; he did not want to arouse suspicions as to his reasons for being in St. Catharines. When Loguen requested that Tubman meet Brown at his hotel, she told Loguen “that the old man might visit her home, for nobody would hurt him there.”¹⁹ A small group of fugitives from Dorchester County assembled at Tubman’s request at her house on North Street.²⁰ She told them of Brown’s scheme; to liberate slaves through armed revolution, striking a first, and unexpected, blow to southern slavery. Brown, with fiery blue eyes, wild gray hair and a flowing long beard, spoke to the small gathering, perhaps reading the draft constitution for the provisional government he envisioned for the hoped-for state for freed slaves (That document had been drafted at Douglass’s house a few short months before.) He spoke Tubman’s language: claiming that he had heard God’s voice directing him to this revolutionary cause, Brown’s evangelical fervor was not out of step with the world view of many fugitive slaves. His vision, resounding in apocalyptic and judgment day metaphors, seemed to answer the prayers so many slaves had comforted themselves with while enslaved. Brown told his audiences that it was time for “God’s wrath to descend,” and that he, and they, were God’s instruments through which “swift justice” would be served to “unrepentant slaveholders.”²¹ Slavery was murder, he probably told them, and God had chosen him to lead an army into slave territory and incite rebellion among the slaves.²² Coming from a white man, this must have seemed incredible to those former slaves gathered to listen to his plan; many had just arrived from bondage and were very suspicious of whites, “afraid of some trick” or lie.²³

Whether Brown told them all of his plans is not known, but his passionate plea had its intended affect. “Harriet Tubman hooked on *his* whole team at once,” Brown wrote

gleefully to his son, “there is the most abundant material, and of the right quality, in this quarter, beyond all doubt.”²⁴ Thomas Elliott and Denard Hughes of the famous Dover Eight joined up, as did Peter Pennington, Joe Bailey and his brother William, who had all come away with Tubman in November 1856. Charles Hall and John Thompson, friends of Tubman’s in Canada, rounded out the group.²⁵ Whether there were others is not known. It is possible that Tubman’s parents and her brothers, John and William Henry, were also there. William lived a few doors away on the corner of North and Geneva streets, and John lived a few short blocks away. Whatever the outcome, when Brown left Tubman that day he shook her hands and called her “General Tubman” three times, determining, then, that she “was a better officer than most” men he had known. He had no doubt she “could command an army as successfully as she had led her small parties of fugitives.”²⁶

Brown’s contacts with Tubman and the community of refugees in St. Catharines continued over the next few days. The very day of his initial meeting with Tubman, Brown left his draft constitution in the hands of William Howard Day, a black publisher in St. Catharines.²⁷ Over the next few days Tubman continued to solicit support for Brown; on the 12th Brown paid her \$15.00 towards her rent and other expenses.²⁸ By the 15th, however, Brown was troubled by her conspicuous absence from St. Catharines. They had planned to meet at the train station, but she failed to arrive. Concerned that she may have fallen ill, Brown wrote to William H. Day inquiring as to her whereabouts. “May I trouble you to see her at once,” he wrote anxiously to Day, and “if she is well; by all means have her come on immediately.” Brown knew she was in dire financial straits, but he also apparently knew that she was prone to ill health. “If she is unwell get her to

send on Thomas Eliot,” he told Day. Thomas Elliott had emerged as Tubman’s right-hand man, and he was probably working to drum up interest in the St. Catharines’ fugitive community in Brown’s insurrection plans. Waiting for her at the Daly House in Ingersol, where Brown would conduct another recruitment and planning meeting, Brown told Day, “I would not on any account fail of having her come if she is able to do so... but I am very anxious to have her come.”²⁹ Tubman, it seems, had become a major player in Brown’s plans.

Unbeknown to Brown, however, Tubman had already left for Toronto on her way to Ingersol, perhaps in an apparent mix-up of plans or communication.³⁰ Day informed Brown that Denard Hughes, Peter Pennington, the Bailey brothers, Hall, and Thompson were all waiting for him at Thompson’s rooming house, “Bachelor’s Hall” at Ingersol.³¹ When and where Brown and Tubman met again is not known. Within a few days, Brown left Canada and traveled to Iowa and Chicago, rounding up a small band of recruits he had left behind while he traveled throughout New England and Canada soliciting more money and aid. He returned with them to Canada, and by the first of May he was arranging a meeting of interested recruits at Chatham’s Masonic Lodge. Brown was still looking for Tubman, but he was unable to locate her, and on May 6, the Rev. Loguen wrote to Brown inquiring if Tubman was with him.³²

On May 8, Brown convened his Chatham Convention, without Tubman or Frederick Douglass, nor any member of his “Secret Six” supporters. He explained his vision for a slave insurrection and invasion at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, and laid out his plan to wage war against southern slaveholders. He believed that once the attack began, blacks throughout the north, Canada, and the South (both slave and free) would come rallying to

the cause. He presented his newly printed Provisional Constitution for the new free state, and the convention delegates voted unanimously to approve the constitution.³³ None of Tubman's friends were among the constitution signers; whether they were present at the meeting is not known. Perhaps the constant shortage of money prevented them from attending the meeting. Rev. Jeremiah Loguen had already expressed concern to Brown that some of the men lacked funds to travel to Chatham.³⁴ One wonders, too, if James Stewart, Harriet's brother, and John Bowley, the husband of Harriet's niece Kessiah, who were both living in Chatham at this time, heard about or attended the meeting, as well.

Ultimately, Elliott, Hughes, the Bailey brothers, Pennington, Hall and Thompson decided not to join Brown. They had already come to Canada at great sacrifice and risk, and perhaps when the time came to commit completely to Brown, they hesitated. Perhaps they felt they had battled slavery enough. Their new lives in freedom were precious now and outweighed any visionary dream of Brown's. They may have also sensed the folly in Brown's plans. But Tubman would continue to support Brown by recruiting more fugitives for his cause, maintaining interest among her friends, and directly assisting in the military planning for the assault. Indeed, she remained a fixture in his plans until nearly the end.

In the interim, there were more pressing problems. While Brown was galvanizing his small army in Chatham, a disgruntled Brown associate, Hugh Forbes, leaked the plans to a few members of Congress. Desperately afraid of exposure, the "Secret Six" met in Boston at the end of May to discuss delaying the planned attack (except for Higginson who disapproved of postponement). Under severe financial pressure, Brown agreed to

delay his scheme, and with \$500 in his pocket and with more promised to him by his supporters, he set out for Kansas until things quieted down.³⁵

With the raid on hold indefinitely, Tubman turned her attention to her household and the needs of her aging and fragile parents. Brown continued to be concerned for her welfare and hoped she would continue her efforts on his behalf.³⁶ During the summer or fall of 1858, Tubman visited Boston, hoping to raise funds for herself and the St. Catharines fugitive community. It was then that she finally met Franklin B. Sanborn. Sanborn, now living in Concord, Massachusetts, was not only a supporter and confidante of Brown, but also a friend and admirer of some of New England's more famous, and controversial, transcendentalists and literary giants. Among his circle were Ralph Waldo Emerson, Bronson Alcott, Henry David Thoreau, John Greenleaf Whittier, Walt Whitman, Lydia Maria Child, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. He was also actively engaged with New England's abolitionist vanguard; he knew William Lloyd Garrison, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Wendell Phillips, Theodore Parker, Samuel May, George Luther Stearns, Louis Hayden, William Wells Brown, William Cooper Nell, John S. Rock, Samuel Gridley Howe, and Gerrit Smith of New York, among many others. Sanborn thought Tubman to be "the heroine of the day."³⁷ He took an instant liking to her, and would eventually become one of her most staunch and reliable supporters, writing the first, and perhaps the most accurate, biography heretofore of Tubman's early life.

As one of Brown's confidantes, Sanborn passed muster overcame Tubman's cautious and suspicious nature and they quickly developed a close bond. Over the next year, Tubman visited Boston on several occasions, seeking to raise interest and funds for the growing fugitive community on Canada, as well as raise money for her own stalled effort

to return to Dorchester County to retrieve her remaining sister, niece and nephew.

Boarding in a house on the backside of Beacon Hill, Boston's pre-Civil War African American neighborhood, Tubman received visitors who had heard of her through a tightly connected abolitionist network. With letters of introduction from her friends in New York, probably Gerrit Smith, Martha Coffin Wright, William H. Seward, and Frederick Douglass, Tubman hosted a succession of meetings and visits to her little room. Probably through her acquaintance with William Lloyd Garrison, which helped provide comfortable access not only to the highest echelons of abolitionist society in Boston, Tubman also found an open door to the inner circles of Boston's powerful women's anti-slavery and suffrage community. The Garrisons, through their relationship with Thomas Garrett in Wilmington, and Lucretia Mott, William Still, and others in Philadelphia, had known Tubman for some years.³⁸

Tubman took considerable risks on such visits. Unable to read or write, she was vulnerable to betrayal, especially were she to be exposed by an unscrupulous pro-slavery Bostonian or mercenary slave-catcher. Sanborn recalled that Tubman used extreme caution before agreeing to meet a stranger at her boarding house. "One of her means of security," Sanborn wrote, "was to carry with her the daguerreotypes of her friends, and show them to each new person. If they recognized the likeness, then all was right."³⁹

Tubman charmed many of her visitors, endearing herself to them and establishing the foundations for friendships that would span the rest of their lifetimes. Edna Dow Cheney, reformer, suffragist, and another early biographer of Tubman, wrote that Tubman had "a very affectionate nature, and forms the strongest personal attachments."⁴⁰

Her loyalty and love for her family dominated Tubman's life and she worried constantly over their well-being, particularly her aging parents. Another winter in Canada proved too difficult for Ben and Rit. Tubman wanted desperately to secure a home for them, and she shrewdly recognized that their survival would only be secured if they returned to the United States, where they might be sheltered and protected by the growing circle of black and white friends then living in New York and Boston. Sometime during the late winter or early spring of 1859, William H. Seward offered Tubman a small parcel of property on the outskirts of Auburn, NY. Seward had inherited a seven-acre farm from his father-in-law, Elijah Miller, on South Street, near the tollgate on the Auburn and Fleming town lines. For a total of \$1200, Seward sold the property to Tubman. Originally known as the Burton Farm, the lot consisted of a house, barn and several outbuildings, and tillable land, providing ample room for Tubman and her parents, and any other family members or friends who were in need of a home.

Seward spent little time in Auburn during that year. Then a powerful and high profile member of the U.S. Senate, who was nurturing presidential aspirations, Seward shouldered numerous responsibilities that kept him in Washington and away from Auburn a significant amount of time.⁴¹ His son, William H. Seward, Jr., may have negotiated the deal with Tubman, handling the financial and legal terms in his father's absence. According to Sanborn, "to the credit of the Secretary of State [Seward] it should be said, that he sold her the property on very favorable terms, and gave her some time for payment."⁴² This was not the first time Seward had sold property on "favorable terms," to individuals in need. Seward, and later his son, built small frame dwellings in and around Auburn on property they owned, selling them for sums ranging from \$300 to

\$500 to immigrant and black families.⁴³ Seward had long been a supporter of immigration and sought to protect the rights of immigrant families, and his commitment to the abolition of slavery and the attainment of equal rights for African Americans was well documented by this time period.⁴⁴ Though this property was larger and more valuable than the other properties Seward sold to needy families, Seward's decision to assist Tubman was consistent with his other philanthropic and community commitments.

In lieu of a \$1200 payment, Seward accepted a mortgage on "easy terms," that is, Tubman put \$25 down on the home, and contracted to make quarterly payments of \$10 with interest.⁴⁵ This offer is remarkable for several reasons. First, Seward was selling the property to a woman, a black woman at that, with no obvious or steady means of income. Property ownership by women was uncommon in this period and few women secured real property in their own names. Seward could have required that the property be sold to Tubman's father, who was legally free. But Tubman must have insisted, and made a strong argument for selling the property to her and her alone. There were legal considerations, however: what if her husband, John Tubman, appeared, and demanded his rights to the property? Did her suffrage friends advise her as to the best legal course of action to protect herself, her property and her family? As a New York resident, Tubman would have had limited citizenship rights. But her status as a "fugitive" slave added legal complexity to an already unusual legal transaction. Tubman was not a citizen; she held no rights either as a free black or slave. The Dred Scott decision, handed down by the Supreme Court in 1857 had denied that blacks, free and enslaved, could be citizens. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 also placed Seward in a precarious position. Seward was probably committing an illegal act by selling the property to a

known fugitive slave. Conceivably, he could have been arrested for aiding Harriet Tubman.

There may have been several reasons why Seward did this. Providing a home for a known runaway and her family of fugitives would not have damaged his reputation – in fact, it probably enhanced it. A staunch abolitionist, Seward was increasingly frustrated by the powerful slave interests in Congress who were supported by President Buchanan. Seward was eager to rally free soil Republicans and northern Democrats to re-take the halls of Congress and the presidency from pro-slavery forces. Though highly speculative, perhaps Seward hoped that while positioning for his own presidential nomination, Seward might have been looking to bolster his position as a committed anti-slavery politician, and perhaps even spark controversial media coverage to enhance his public stature. Seward and Tubman must have considered the possibility that she and her family would be at risk of capture if they moved to Auburn. Was Seward willing to sacrifice Tubman? One can imagine the headlines: “Seward Shelters and Sells Property to Notorious Fugitive Slave!”

In addition, Seward probably knew that Tubman had known James A. Stewart, the Congressman from Cambridge, Maryland. Stewart, who was a staunch defender and supporter of President Buchanan, had been raising quite a ruckus on the Eastern Shore. He had conducted slaveholder conventions with his fellow slaveholders and demanded state and federal protection of their slave assets, which were continuing to run away in great numbers. Tubman also knew Samuel D. LeCompte, formerly of Dorchester County, who had been appointed as a jurist for the territory of Kansas and who was the architect of the highly controversial Lecompton constitution that would have made

Kansas a new slave state, in defiance of the majority of anti-slavery forces in Kansas. As some one who was intimately familiar with Stewart, LeCompte, and their slaves, Tubman could provide Seward with ample ammunition if he needed it. Could Seward have viewed her as an insurance policy, of sorts?

Whatever the motivations, Seward and Tubman reached an agreement that benefited both of them. Though Tubman knew full well the risks involved in moving to Auburn, she was also assured of as much protection as the black and white community could provide in the event that slave catchers might threaten her. Martha Coffin Wright and her small circle of anti-slavery and suffrage friends could be counted on to help provide comfort and security for Ben and Rit. Living in New York also provided Tubman with closer contact with other New York abolitionists such as Gerrit Smith, Samuel May, and her close allies in Albany, including her cousin John Hooper.

The need for money became paramount for Tubman after she purchased her home. Though Seward had “gave her some time for payment,” Tubman started right way soliciting funds to help pay for her obligation to him.⁴⁶ With her parents and her brother John safely ensconced in her house in Auburn, Tubman headed to Boston. Arriving in late May, she began her rounds of visiting the homes of anti-slavery activists, giving lectures and speeches on her life in slavery and recounting some incidents of her many slave rescues. John Brown was in town that spring as well, raising more funds for his planned assault on Harper’s Ferry. Tubman and Brown met on several occasions, planning and scheming. Harriet had suggested the “4th of July as a good time to ‘raise the mill.’”⁴⁷ Tubman had two missions at hand; helping Brown raise money and to also raise money for herself. Wendell Phillips recalled to Sarah Bradford that the last time he “ever

saw John Brown was under my own roof, as he brought Harriet Tubman to me, saying: ‘Mr. Phillips, I bring you one of the best and bravest persons on this continent—*General* Tubman, as we call her’.”⁴⁸ This was probably the last time Tubman saw Brown, too.

Brown had successfully raised \$2000 after spending three weeks in May in Boston; Tubman no doubt hoped to tap into the same wellspring of supporters eager to help Brown put an end to slavery. On May 30th, Sanborn wrote to Thomas W. Higginson, suggesting that he see Tubman, “the woman who brought away 50 slaves in 8 journeys made to Maryland.”⁴⁹ He told Higginson that she was staying at “168 Cambridge St.” [check city directory for residents of building], and that she would be holding an audience the following Wednesday at “Mrs. Bartol’s on Chestnut St. – can you not attend? Even you would be amazed at some of her stories.”⁵⁰ Tubman’s reception was a success, apparently. Ednah Cheney had requested that Bartol open her home “for a gathering of friends... who might be disposed to aid a real heroine.” Lucy Osgood reported, second hand, to Lydia Maria Child, on the “unique entertainment.”⁵¹

Where Mrs. Cheney found her I do not know, but her name is Harriet. She is coal black & was a slave only three years ago, but within that time she has taken leg bail herself, & assisted no fewer than fifty others to do the same. Two or three times she has returned to the very plantation where she had served, & brought away with her companies of her relatives & friends. Her old father & mother she had helped out of bondage, & the object of this gathering was to assist her to buy a little place for them in Auburn. Her course had not been always smooth.⁵²

Tubman told them how she journeyed at night and slept by day. She also sent them into fits of laughter when she told them of her attempt to bring away her husband in 1851.

Tubman “went for her husband,” Osgood wrote, and “she had carefully provided herself with clothing to make him, she said, fit to be seen among folks – Lo! However, the recreant had taken to himself another helpmeet & strongly advised her to give up the nonsense of freedom, & ‘I had his clothes’ said she, ‘but no husband.’ – Mrs. Follen & Mrs. Putnam shouted at her comic pathos – They dubbed her Moses the deliverer, instead of Harriet.”⁵³

The story of Tubman’s husband rejection, and her humorous delivery of the event, resonated with these women. While they were deeply interested in her tales of the horrors of slavery and her own courageous efforts to bring away her family and friends, Tubman’s “comic pathos” provided an alternative anti-slavery story that was unmatched by the legions of male ex-slave lecturers and performers.⁵⁴ For white women, Tubman’s portrayal of her husband’s philandering would have, perhaps, resonated on a personal level; it evoked the fear of male power and the unacknowledged sacrifices they had often made for the men in their lives. Tubman, after all, had risked so much to bring her husband to the North to be with her, and yet he turned her away and called her foolish. Tubman’s tale would have also fit a cultural stereotype that white women had come to accept of many black men: that of the unfaithful black husband all too willing to abandon his wife for another.

Tubman’s retelling of her heroic feats on the Underground Railroad also challenged white male authority, a topic close to the hearts and minds of reform women in Boston’s anti-slavery circles. Capturing her audiences’ imaginations, Tubman’s legendary exploits on the Underground Railroad portrayed a very personal, and yet collective experience of resistance and liberation that resonated for both white and African-American women.

Whether Tubman recognized at that moment this subliminal appeal is not known; no doubt she quickly realized how eager and receptive abolitionists were to hear her stories, and to give her money. Tubman's political savvy, well honed by a decade of participating in anti-slavery, equal rights, and Underground Railroad activities, helped establish her as more than a mere storyteller.

A great storyteller she was, however. She moved her audiences deeply. Plainly dressed, very short and petite, quite black skinned, and missing front teeth, Tubman physically made a stark contrast to Sojourner Truth, one of the most famous former slave women then speaking on the anti-slavery lecture circuit, and who was nearly six feet tall. Both women had their femininity challenged, though in entirely different ways. In 1858, Truth bared her breasts during a public suffrage meeting when pro-slavery hecklers doubted she was a woman. Tubman, on the other hand, was considered the "most of a man" by none other than John Brown, who continued to refer to her as "General Tubman" throughout their brief relationship. Unlike Truth, who used the incident in the meeting to defend her womanhood and denigrate the manhood of her critics, Tubman embraced an identity that crossed gender lines. She basked in the apparent compliment to her great military genius and leadership qualities, virtues most certainly reserved in the 19th century for white men.⁵⁵ Of course, her femaleness was not questioned despite of her obvious physical strength: Tubman's petite frame and beautiful singing voice belied any taunts of masculinity. Like Truth, however, Tubman shocked her audiences with stories of slavery and the injustices of life as a black woman. Black men dominated the anti-slavery lecture circuit, but there was a huge void of representation for black women's voices. This void was filled in part by Tubman and Truth, who stood for millions of

slave women whose lives were marred by their particular vulnerability under slavery, which opened them to emotional and physical abuse at the hands of white men.

Both women also laid claim to a deep spiritual connection to God. As Nell Painter has argued, Truth relied “on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and a remarkable network of abolitionist, feminist, and spiritualist supporters,” through which “she healed the fear and insecurity embedded in her wretched childhood.”⁵⁶ The same could be said of Tubman who also believed that she was God’s instrument. Thomas Garrett later wrote that Tubman “had more confidence in the voice of God, as spoken direct to her soul... that she talked with God, and he talked with her every day of her life, and she has declared to me that she felt no more fear of being arrested by her former master, or any other person, when in his immediate neighborhood, than she did in the State of New York, or Canada, for she said she never ventured only where God sent her, and her faith in a Supreme Power truly was great.”⁵⁷ For both Truth and Tubman, though, profound religious devotion allowed them to claim respectability and authority with white audiences when few such options were available to black women.

Harriet, however, was also charming and witty and her audiences were deeply intrigued by her. “She has great dramatic power,” Ednah Cheney wrote, “the scene rises before you as she saw it, and her voice and language change with her different actors.”⁵⁸ Higginson was more blunt: “She is jet black and cannot read or write, only talk, besides acting.”⁵⁹ Unlike Sojourner Truth, however, Tubman rarely spoke in public. Prior to the summer of 1858, most of Tubman’s lectures, or what Jean Humez calls “performances,” remained within the sheltered and intimate parlors of abolition’s elite, or the homes of her fellow fugitives in Canada and elsewhere.⁶⁰ Her identity remained obscure for obvious

reasons; she needed protection from people who would have been more than happy to claim her as their prize. She was constantly moving, too, in and out of the South ferrying fugitive slaves, meeting privately with prominent antislavery activists in search of funds, or working odd jobs to support herself. She did not have time for a more full-time public life. Therefore, though she frequented antislavery rallies and lectures throughout the 1850s, she had mostly remained a spectator.

But the new urgency of her needs in the spring and summer of 1859 changed all that. By June, having had a successful event on Chestnut Street and probably in other places, she began to see the financial rewards for telling her stories. John Brown, however, was anxious for her to return to Canada and gather her recruits for him, as he intended to conduct his raid the following month. In early June 1859, Tubman told Sanborn that she could not or would not go, so Sanborn hurriedly wrote Higginson (who was then living and preaching at a church in Worcester), asking him to make the trip to Canada instead. “You have already some acquaintance with the Canada people – and you would be able to go instantly to the right places and get the right men,” he told Higginson. As further enticement, Sanborn told Higginson that Tubman was concerned about “a society in aid of destitute fugitives at St. Catharines – which has some reason to complain of Mr. Wilson the missionary among fugitives in that town – whom you probably know – It is said that the contributions of the friends do not reach the fugitives at all and they are desirous to have the matter looked into. How would you like to make a journey to that region for this double purpose?”⁶¹ Tubman was still trying to fulfill two missions: that of providing for herself and her parents, and that of looking after the welfare of desperately needy fugitives in Canada. Hiram Wilson had been under suspicion for some time for

mismanaging funds intended for runaway slaves in Canada. Tubman may have had first hand knowledge of this, or perhaps was merely passing along communication sent to her from her family and friends still in Canada.

In either case, Tubman spent several days in Concord, visiting with Sanborn and his circle of friends, the Whitings, the Alcotts, Mrs. Horace Mann, and the Brooks. Ann Whiting attempted to teach Harriet to read, to no avail.⁶² Tubman spoke at a meeting at a local Concord church, and again to small and friendly audiences throughout that week, retelling her stories of aiding the escapes of “fifty slaves.”⁶³

It was also during the month of June that Tubman was evidently contemplating a visit to New Bedford, “where many of her protégés are in hiding,” including Winnebar Johnson, Henry Cooper, and others.⁶⁴ On June 4, Maria Weston Chapman provided Tubman with a letter of introduction to a Mrs. Arnold of New Bedford, where, Chapman told Arnold, Tubman was hoping to raise funds for “securing a home for the parents she has rescued.”⁶⁵ Chapman was also hopeful that Arnold would agree that Tubman was “the suitable person to undertake to bring off the children of Charles, about whom I had so fruitless a correspondence with the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee & others.”⁶⁶ Chapman had apparently written to Arnold earlier in the week, probably describing Tubman’s successful raids back to Eastern Shore plantations to secure the freedom of other slaves. Who Charles was, or where his family was being held in slavery, remains a mystery. It was becoming abundantly clear, however, that Tubman’s identity as “Moses the deliverer,” now expanded well beyond the black community.⁶⁷

Whether Tubman went to New Bedford or not is not known. In mid-June she spoke at Thomas Higginson’s church in Worcester, regaling the audience with “tales of

adventure” which were “beyond anything in fiction.”⁶⁸ Higginson now thought she was the “greatest heroine of the age,” and he found her “ingenuity and generalship... extraordinary.”⁶⁹ Higginson wrote his mother that Tubman had “been back eight times secretly and brought out in all sixty slaves with her, including all her own family, besides aiding many more in other ways to escape.” There was a “reward of twelve thousand dollars offered for her in Maryland,” he wrote, making this the first mention of a specific monetary reward for her capture.⁷⁰ He was convinced however, that she would “probably be burned alive whenever she is caught, which she probably will be, first or last, as she is going again.”⁷¹ Already, Tubman was creating a larger than life persona, one that would carry through for the rest of her life. Her risk-taking and courage was the marvel of the anti-slavery circuit, and so genuinely authentic that even seasoned abolitionists like Higginson were deeply impressed by her remarkable life.

Though Higginson expected her to return to the Eastern Shore momentarily, she did not go again for quite some time. She was raising good money and extended her stay in New England throughout the summer. It was a busy anti-slavery season in New England: Tubman evidently became quite popular on the lecture platforms throughout the greater Boston area, sharing the stage with numerous more professional, and salaried black and white anti-slavery activists lecturing throughout the summer. Some of abolition’s most prominent black activists, including William Wells Brown, William Still, Rev. Jeremiah Loguen, Frederick Douglass, William Cooper Nell, and many others, headlined numerous fairs, conventions, meetings and lectures. Though Tubman stayed with white families in Concord for a few nights, she mostly depended upon the hospitality of blacks living in

Boston, including Lewis Hayden, John S. Rock, and probably other friends and relatives living in Boston's historic black neighborhood.⁷²

On the fourth of July 1859, Tubman addressed the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society meeting at Framingham. Higginson welcomed her to the platform, telling the audience he wished to introduce them to “a conductor on the Underground Railroad, who, having first transformed herself from a chattel into a human being, had since transformed sixty other chattels into other human beings, by her own personal efforts.” For dramatic affect, he did not tell them her real name, but rather declared that he found it difficult to introduce her – raising the excitement as to who this little woman standing on the stage with him could be. “She came here from a place in the slave States; she came by land, and had been here in a reasonable time. (Laughter) At the South, she was called ‘Moses’ – after an ancient leader, who took men and women into the Promised Land. (Applause).”⁷³

Many people in the audience had probably already heard rumors of this “deliverer,” who returned to her old home in Maryland to bring away family and friends. Tubman stepped forward and greeted the cheering audience. After the applause subsided, and a hushed silence fell over the crowd, Tubman began to speak. First, she told of her “sufferings as a slave, her escape, and her achievements on the Underground Railroad, in a style of quaint simplicity, which excited the most profound interest in her hearers,” a reporter from the *Liberator* wrote. Unfortunately, he did not record Tubman's words that day, remarking instead that “mere words could do no justice to the speaker, and there fore we do not undertake to give them.”⁷⁴ When she was finished, Higginson informed the crowd that

this brave woman had never asked for a cent from the Abolitionists, but that all her operations had been conducted at her own cost, with money earned by herself. Now, however, having brought her father and mother out of slavery, she found that the labor required for their support rendered her incapable of doing anything in the way of business, and she therefore desired to raise a few hundred dollars to enable her to buy a little place where her father and mother could support themselves, and enable her to resume the practice of her profession!⁷⁵

The audience roared, applauding enthusiastically: a collection was started, yielding a modest sum of thirty-seven dollars. With this and additional monies she was able to raise, she paid Seward \$200 toward her debt, offering more than the terms of their agreement required.⁷⁶

Such successful public performances kept Tubman actively involved in New England's anti-slavery circuit that summer. On August 1st, "jubilees" were held throughout New England, celebrating the twenty-first anniversary of full emancipation and freedom for West Indian slaves held in bondage by the British government.⁷⁷ In Boston, the celebration coincided with a meeting of the New England Colored Citizen's Convention, held at Tremont Temple. The delegates to the Convention adopted resolutions condemning the Fugitive Slave Act, pro-slavery religious organizations, the Dred Scot decision, segregated schools, and the African colonization movement, and in particular the African Colonization Society, which sought to repatriate African Americans, slave and free alike, to Africa. On the evening of the first, Tubman once again took center stage. This time she was afforded an opportunity to express her own political views. Introduced to the audience as "Harriet Garrison," in an obvious attempt to obscure her identity, Tubman was once again identified as "one of the most successful conductors on the Underground Railroad."⁷⁸ Whether she recounted her tales of life in

slavery, her Underground Railroad exploits, or spoke of fugitive life in Canada is not known. She “denounced the colonization movement,” and

told the story of a man who sowed onions and garlic on his land to increase his dairy productions; but he soon found the butter was strong and would not sell, and so he concluded to sow clover instead. But he soon found the wind had blown the onions and garlic all over his field. Just so, she said, the white people had got the ‘nigger’ here to do their drudgery, and now they were trying to root ‘em out and send ‘em to Africa. ‘But,’ she said, ‘they can’t do it; we’re rooted here, and they can’t pull us up.’⁷⁹

As the crowd was applauding her, though, Rev. John B. Smith from New Bedford, a member of the African Colonization Society, stepped onto the stage, signifying a challenge Tubman’s speech. He demanded to be heard, and was given the floor. Smith had already spoken earlier in the day in favor of colonization, and he forcefully resented the attacks on the motives of the Colonization Society, insisting that the repatriation of African Americans was “for evangelizing and civilizing Africa.”⁸⁰ The crowd was not sympathetic, and, ultimately, it was Tubman’s simple parable that carried the day.

The following day, Tubman headed home to Auburn, then on to Rochester where she probably spoke with Douglass about her needs for more money, and finally to St. Catharines, to check on family and friends and quite probably to deliver clothing and other articles collected in Boston to needy families in St. Catharines.⁸¹ She may have also spoken to the few recruits she had gathered for John Brown; most of them, however, had begun to scatter throughout Ontario. She soon returned to Boston, however, and over the next couple of weeks in early-to-mid August Tubman mingled with many of the anti-slavery movement’s black leaders, who had remained in the Boston area after the Convention to attend and participate in lectures in the area. William Still came from Philadelphia to speak at the Twelfth Street Baptist Church on the Underground Railroad;

Rev. Loguen also spoke there on his Underground Railroad efforts in Syracuse, claiming, oddly, that he “very seldom... sends fugitives to Canada, unless they are of the timid class, who dare not run the risk of remaining in the States.”⁸² One wonders how this would have sounded to Tubman, who understood the dangers that existed for any fugitive slave living in the North.

John Brown’s son expected to meet with Tubman in Boston in the middle of August, but there is no record of such a meeting. Instead, at about that time Tubman was making her way to New Bedford where she may have stayed at least three weeks. On August 27th Sanborn wrote to John Brown, who had apparently inquired of her whereabouts, that she was “probably in New Bedford, sick. She has staid in N.E. a long time, and been a kind of missionary.”⁸³ By the middle of September Brown was already ensconced at his base of operations in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, just across the state border from Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, where he was finalizing his attack plans and waiting for Tubman to join him. On September 16, Sanborn wrote Brown that he expected Harriet would be there soon. But Brown was impatient and anxious – he had sent inquiries to other people in search of her. Lewis Hayden wrote to Brown in a letter written on September 16th, that he had just written Tubman, “requesting her to come to Boston, saying that she must come right on, which I think she will do. When she does come we will send her on.”⁸⁴ A week later, Sanborn wrote to Brown that Tubman still had not been heard from. “I have no news yet from Harriet T., but hope I may tomorrow.”⁸⁵

It has long been assumed that Tubman was incapacitated by illness in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in the fall of 1859, and, that this was why she could not join Brown in his attack at Harpers Ferry. There is a possibility, however, that she actually may have been

in Maryland, recruiting local slaves in support of Brown's cause. According to Talbot County, Maryland, historian Dickson Preston, local Talbot County newspapers reported in October 1859 "Brown had wandered through southern Talbot County dressed as a woman, seeking recruits for the insurrection he planned. Among other places, he was supposed to have appeared at such places as Trappe District estates at Boston, Crosiadore, Howell's Point, and Compton. According to the papers there was little doubt that someone had been traveling through the county in disguise, but no proof that it had been Brown."⁸⁶ Could it have been Tubman, traveling among the slaves and free blacks on the Eastern Shore, trying to recruit followers to join in Brown's attack? Given Tubman's propensity for disguise and trickery, could she have left the impression that she was a man dressed as a woman? Another possibility concerns two of her nephews and a niece, John and Moses Ross, and their sister Harriet, the children of her brother John Stewart. Dr. Anthony Thompson had sold them to his daughter, Sarah Thompson Haddaway, who was then living in Trappe in Talbot County. Could Tubman have been hoping to bring away the children, too? Was she also hoping to bring her sister Rachel away then, as well? There is no proof, however, either in Tubman's various narratives, or in any other documentary evidence, that Tubman was in fact in Maryland at this time. None of Tubman's early biographers mention where Tubman was during the six weeks prior to Brown's raid in Virginia. It remains, though, an intriguing possibility. Another possibility, of course, is that Tubman herself got cold feet. She may have, though no documentation exists to support such a conjecture, decided that Brown's attack was doomed to failure; she probably knew he had few followers leading up to the attack, leaving him incredibly vulnerable. Douglass had rejected Brown's scheme as

unworkable and perhaps Tubman, too, came to the same conclusion. Better to feign illness than to endure Brown's disapproval. Her strong survival instinct may have protected her in the end. Nevertheless, her silence on this issue, even years later, may indicate a careful decision not to reveal the full extent of her participation in Brown's raid.

Nevertheless, without Tubman's assistance, Brown commenced his attack on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry on Sunday night, October 16, 1859. By Tuesday, Brown and his small group of twenty-one men were holed up inside an engine house where Robert E. Lee and a party of U.S. Marines had forced them to retreat. The insurgents were captured and the raid was squelched. Both of Brown's sons, Watson and Oliver, were killed, as were eight others. Only five rebels were able to escape, including one of the original group five African Americans, Osborne P. Anderson, who had joined Brown in Chatham. Seven, including Brown, were arrested and thrown in jail, where they awaited trial on charges of treason and inciting a slave insurrection.⁸⁷

John Brown's attack on Harper's Ferry sent shock waves throughout the country. To many southerners, this was confirmation that northern aggression and hostility was incontrovertible. The insurrection thus only served to strength their resolve to resist any attempt to restrict or abolish slavery. Southern secessionists pressed harder, and the Democratic Party, already splintering over the slavery issue, divided further. In Boston, Brown's "Secret Six" panicked. A search of Brown's temporary residence in Chambersburg had produced incriminating letters and documents, implicating members of the secret committee as well as many others who had supported Brown (though many remained uninformed of the extent of Brown's true plans.) Sanborn fled to Canada, as

did Douglass and others who were fearful of being arrested and carried off to Virginia for trial.

Tubman was in New York City when the news of the failed raid was announced in the newspapers. Who she was with is not clear, but Sanborn later wrote that “she was in New York at that time, and on the day of the affair at Harper’s Ferry, she felt her usual warning that something was wrong--she could not tell what. Finally she told her hostess that it must be Captain Brown who was in trouble, and that they should soon hear bad news from him. The next day’s newspaper brought tidings of what had happened.”⁸⁸ Her dream finally made sense to her. The three-headed serpent, and the men who rushed in and “struck down the two younger heads,” represented Brown’s sons who had been killed by Lee’s men during the raid. The third head, the “old man, still looking so wishful,” was Brown, soon to be found guilty of treason and hung at the gallows in Virginia.⁸⁹ Over the next six weeks, confusion reigned, as co-conspirators and supporters watched while Brown and his accomplices were tried and convicted. Though Sanborn and others had initially fled the country out of fear of reprisal, they quickly returned, confident that they would not be arrested. Tubman may have remained in New York City for a time, but her whereabouts over the six weeks before Brown’s execution remain unknown.

Her family, however, had been settling into their new home in Auburn. Her brother John had been caring for their aged parents, but the responsibility was weighing heavily on him. On November 1st, in the only known surviving letter from one of Tubman’s family members, John Stewart wrote to her, seeking help and advice on the best way to handle their sometimes difficult parents.⁹⁰

Sister Harriet Tubman,

I am well and hope you are the same. Father's health is very good for him. I received your welcome latter yesterday which relieved my uneasiness. we thought quite hard of you for not writing before. we would like to see you much, but if you can do better where you are you had perhaps better stay. Father wanted to go to Canada after his things on foot but I would not consent as I thought it would be too much for him and he consents to stay until he gets your advice on the subject as he has no means for going. please write as soon as possible and not delay. We three are alone, I have a good deal of trouble with them as they are getting old and feeble. There was a man by the name of Young that promised father a stove and some things to go to keeping house but has refused to do anything for them. Brother John has been with father ever since he left Troy and is doing the best he can. Catherine Stewart has not come yet but wants to very bad. send what things you want father to bring if you think best for him to go. I am going to send a letter to Wm Henry. if you wish me to say anything for you to him let me know when you write. Seward has received nothing as Payment since the 4th of July that I knows of. Write me particularly what you want me to do as I want to hear from you very much. I would like to know what luck you have had since you have been gone. have heard that you are doing well. hope to find it so. Direct my letter to me Box 750, Auburn. Truly Yours, John Stewart.⁹¹

Harriet knew she was needed at home; so she probably traveled back to Auburn to help her brother with her parents set up housekeeping, retrieve her father's belongings in Canada, and perhaps to discuss her debt obligations to Seward.⁹² But by the beginning of December she was back in Boston. Brown's execution was set for December 2, 1859, in Charlestown, Virginia, and Harriet may have wanted to be near other Brown friends on that day (and she may have needed to raise more money to support her parents back in Auburn.) At the time of Brown's death, Tubman went to Ednah Cheney's home to find comfort, but could not be consoled. "Her heart was too full, she must talk," Cheney later wrote,

'I've been studying and studying upon it,' [Tubman said], 'and its clar to me, it wasn't John Brown that died on that gallows. When I think how he gave up his life for our people, and how he never flinched, but was so brave to the end; its clar to me it wasn't mortal man, it was God in him. When I think of all the groans and tears and prayers I've heard on the plantations, and remember that God is a prayer-hearing God, I feel that his time is drawing near.'⁹³

Tubman had, perhaps, a clearer understanding of the implications of Brown's fateful raid than did Cheney. "God," Tubman told her, "was always near... He gave me my strength, and he set the North Star in the heavens; he meant for me to be free."⁹⁴ And so did John Brown. Later, while visiting Sanborn in Concord, Tubman spied a bust of Brown in Sanborn's library. "The first time she came to my house, in Concord, after that tragedy, she was shown into a room in the evening, where Brackett's bust of John Brown was standing. The sight of it, which was new to her, threw her into a sort of ecstasy of sorrow and admiration."⁹⁵ Tubman admired Brown more than any other acquaintance she had made through her long acquaintance with the anti-slavery movement. To her great satisfaction, his attack and death would immortalize him in the minds of many free and enslaved blacks throughout the country, who would rally around invocations of his memory and set their sites on overthrowing slavery.⁹⁶ In fact, she later told a close ally, though she had been disappointed that she did not join Brown in his raid, she later realized that "he done more in dying, than 100 men would in living."⁹⁷

By the middle of December, the U.S. Senate convened a commission to investigate the Brown affair. Headed by James A. Mason of Virginia and Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, the "Mason Commission," as it would be called, began a broad inquiry into Brown's "crime," a development that quickly renewed Sanborn, Howe, Smith and others' fears of arrest.⁹⁸ On the 20th of December, Sanborn wrote to a friend that Howe and the others were expected to leave soon for Canada, and that Tubman would also return there.⁹⁹ By the first of January 1860 she was back in Auburn, settling some of her debts with Seward.¹⁰⁰

Given her vulnerability as a Brown co-conspirator (Virginia authorities had located several letters among Brown's papers which mentioned her role in his plans), Tubman probably packed up her family and moved back to the relative safety of St. Catharines.¹⁰¹ In fact, on January 17, a U.S. Marshall from Harper's Ferry was in Auburn, possibly "engaged in summoning witnesses for the Senate Investigating Committee," including, conceivably, Tubman, when the Marshall, by design or by sheer luck, ran into John Brown's co-conspirator, Osborne P. Anderson, who had escaped from Harper's Ferry back in October. What Anderson was doing in Auburn is not known; it had been nearly two months since his escape from Harper's Ferry. Why he was not in Canada is a mystery; he must have had contacts and supporters there, or perhaps, he was even there to see Tubman. The U.S. Marshall attempted to arrest him, but "friends" sent Anderson to Canada, "or parts unknown."¹⁰² Even Auburn was no longer safe for Tubman and her family. The New Year brought enormous tensions in the United States as the drumbeat of secession grew louder in the wake of the Brown affair. War was coming, but Tubman was already prepared for battle.

CHAPTER EIGHT NOTES

¹ John W. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977). Interview with "William Cornish," 423-426.

² For detailed histories of black life in Canada, see Robin Winks, Blacks in Canada: A History 2nd ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997). ; Jason H. Silverman, Unwelcome Guests: Canada West's Response to Fugitive Slaves, 1800-1865. (New York: Associated Faculty Press, Inc., 1985). ; Jonathan William Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario, 1830-1890: Did the 49th Parallel Make a Difference?" (Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton University, 1979). See also, work by Fred Landon, Professor at Western Ontario University in the early 20th century, including articles on Canada's fugitive and black settlements in the *Journal of Negro History*, *Ontario History*, and in a variety of other historical society publications and records.

³ Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney, "Moses," *Freedmen's Record*, March 1865.

⁴ *Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society Records*. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor, MI.. "7th Annual Report, 1858."

⁵ Winks, Blacks in Canada. See pages 142-271 in particular.

⁶ Ontario, Canada, Census, 1861.

⁷ William Still, The Underground Railroad. (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., rpt. edition 1970). 92-93. Still transcribes Nat's name as "Ambie," though census records from Maryland indicate it is spelled "Amby." Affey White's relationship to Nat Amby is unknown, though her residence on the waterfront in Baltimore is a clue to perhaps a long distance maritime connection within the family, from Dorchester County to Baltimore. Many of the free black Amby's were involved in maritime trades, and several of the enslaved Amby's owned by John Muir and others were located in the Cook's point region on the Choptank River in Dorchester County. A free Joseph Amby, age forty-nine and a seaman, was living in Baltimore in 1850; he was probably related to Nat and the two boys, Henry and Joseph who Nat refers to in his letter to Still. Living in Affey White's household in 1850 is Minty Bailey and her husband Levin, a sailor. See Bureau of the Census. United States Federal Census, 1850. Baltimore, MD.

⁸ "New York." *The Underground Railroad: Manuscript materials collected by Professor Siebert*. US 5278.36.25. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. See work by Elbert Wixom located in this collection for more detailed information on the URR route through the Finger Lakes region, which included Auburn and vicinity.

⁹ Philip S. Foner, ed., Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999). 600-601. This is only one of two surviving Douglass letters in which he mentions Tubman.

¹⁰ The Secret Six were: Gerrit Smith, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Samuel Gridley Howe, Franklin B. Sanborn, George L. Stearns, and Theodore Parker.

¹¹ For secondary sources and more detail on John Brown and his plans for a raid into the south to liberate slaves, see, Stephen B. Oates, To Purge This Land with Blood. (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984). ; Edward J. Renehan Jr., The Secret Six: The True Tale of the Men Who Conspired with John Brown. (New York: Crown Publishers, 1995). ; W.E.B. Du Bois, John Brown rpt. 1909 ed. (New York: Modern Library Paperback, 2001). See also, Franklin B. Sanborn, Recollections of Seventy Years. (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1909). Also, for Frederick Douglass's role see, William S. McFeeley, Frederick Douglass. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991).

¹² See Renehan Jr., Secret Six. Oates, Purge. and Sanborn, Recollections.

¹³ Brown had traveled with Loguen to St. Catharines on April 5, 1858.

¹⁴ Several John Brown biographers have conflated Tubman's participation with Brown's scheme, her knowledge of Underground Railroad routes and border state territory, by claiming that she advised Brown on the terrain in that part of Virginia where he was planning his attack. There is no documentation, nor even circumstantial evidence that Tubman did this. She was born and raised on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, limited her rescues to the Eastern Shore and Baltimore, and did not spend time in Virginia or Western Maryland. More than likely, Tubman could solicit crucial information about slaveholders, geography, and other such reconnaissance information from Virginia fugitives known to her in Canada. She probably assured him that she could infiltrate enemy lines in the Harper's Ferry region when the time came, as well.

¹⁵ Franklin B. Sanborn, The Life and Letters of John Brown. (Boston, 1885). 452. "Letter, John Brown to John Brown, Jr., April 8, 1858."

¹⁶ Lillie B. Chase Wyman, "Harriet Tubman," *The New England Magazine*, March 1896. 117. See also Franklin Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, July 17, 1863.

¹⁷ Sanborn, Brown. 452. Italics mine.

¹⁸ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." See also, Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 82-83.

¹⁹ Wyman, "Tubman." 116.

²⁰ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to William Lloyd Garrison, li, January 10, 1869." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College., Northampton, MA.. According to Martha Coffin Wright, Tubman told her that "John Brown staid at her house in Canada, while he was there."

²¹ Renehan Jr., Secret Six. 142-143.

²² Oates, Purge. 229.

²³ Benjamin Drew, . The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery rpt. 1969, Tilden G. Edelstein, ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1855). Interview with John Seward [Stewart], 27.

²⁴ Sanborn, Brown. 452. "Letter, Brown to John Brown, Jr., April 8, 1858."

²⁵ "Letter, John Brown [Ingersoll] to William H. Day [St. Catharines], April 16, 1858," in John Brown/Boyd B. Stutler Collection. West Virginia Division of Culture and History/West Virginia Memory Project. Charleston, WV. ; and "Letter, William H. Day [St. Catharines] to John Brown, April 17, 1858," in Dorothy Sterling, ed., Speak out in Thunder Tones: Letters and Other Writings of Black Northerners, 1787-1865 (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1973). 274.

²⁶ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." See also, Wyman, "Tubman."

²⁷ William Howard Day graduated from Oberlin College in 1847, and later received a D.D. from Livingston College. During the 1850s he worked as a reporter and editor for various newspapers in Ohio, and published his own newspaper, the "Aliened American," from 1852-1855. He moved to Canada in 1857, setting up a shop in St. Catharines where he printed Brown's pamphlet outlining the Provisional Constitution for his visionary free state. Working for the Freedman's Bureau after the Civil War, Day committed himself to establishing schools throughout the south for black children. He later became a minister in the A.M.E. Zion Church.

²⁸ "Diary." *John Brown Note Books*, 1838-1859. Ms.q.1996. Boston Public Library, Boston, MA. Boston.. On April 14th Brown also paid Tubman \$25.00 in gold for "G. Smith's Draft."

²⁹ "Brown/Boyd."

³⁰ Day wrote that Tubman had been put on the train by "Jackson." It is not known if this is Peter Jackson, who ran away with Harriet's brothers in 1854, some other fugitive from the Eastern Shore, or another friend. Letter, Day to Brown, April 17, 1858. Sterling, ed., Speak Out. 274

³¹ Letter, Day to Brown April 17, 1858. Sterling, ed., Speak Out. 274

³² Letter, Day to Brown, May 3, 1858, "Brown/Boyd." , and letter, Jeremiah Loguen to Brown, May 6, 1858, Sterling, ed., Speak Out. 274-275.

³³ Oates, Purge. 243-247.

³⁴ Sterling, ed., Speak Out. "Letter, Loguen to Brown, May 6, 1858." 274-275.

³⁵ Oates, Purge. 250-251.

³⁶ "Letter, Brown to Douglass, June 22, 1858." in "Brown/Boyd."

³⁷ "Letter, Franklin Sanborn to Friend [Thomas W. Higginson], May 30, 1859." Anti-Slavery Collection. Ms.E.5.1 . 53 pt. 1. Boston Public Library. Boston.

³⁸ William Wells Brown remembered that Tubman had first come to Boston in 1854. See William Wells Brown, The Rising Son; or, the Antecedents and Advancement of the Colored Race. (1874; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970). 536-539. If this is true, she did not become known to the white anti-slavery community for some time. She may have visited Boston on occasion, seeking out friends who had run away from Dorchester County and who may have settled in larger cities and ports like Boston and New Bedford. There is little evidence, however, that she spent any time in Boston prior to 1858, circulating among abolition's leaders.

³⁹ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."

⁴⁰ Cheney, "Moses."

⁴¹ In May 1859, Seward also left for an extended tour of Europe, returning in the late fall.

⁴² Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." See also Bradford, Scenes. 81. Seward was appointed Secretary of State by Abraham Lincoln in 1860.

⁴³ "[William H. Seward - Builder]." Newspaper Scrapbook. Seward House Collection. Auburn, NY.

⁴⁴ In fact, his support of immigrant rights negatively affected his campaign for the presidency.

⁴⁵ "Microfilm Reels 192-193." Seward Papers. Harvard University. Cambridge. See also, Rebecca Green. "History of Harriet Tubman and Her Brick House," Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: 1998.

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- ⁴⁶ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."; and, Bradford, Scenes. 81
- ⁴⁷ Sanborn, Brown. (Letter, Edwin Morton to Frank Sanborn, June 1, 1859. 468.
- ⁴⁸ Bradford, Scenes. (p. 5. Letter from Wendell Phillips to Bradford, June 16, 1868.
- ⁴⁹ "Sanborn to Higginson, May 30, 1859."
- ⁵⁰ "Sanborn to Higginson, May 30, 1859." Mrs. Bartol, wife of Cyrus Bartol who was a Congregationalist-Unitarian Minister at 17 Chestnut Street.
- ⁵¹ "Letter, Lucy Osgood to Lydia Maria Child, June 2, 1859." Lydia Maria Child Papers. Anti-Slavery Collection Microform. Card #1110, Cornell University Libraries. Ithaca, NY.. Osgood told Child that her neighbor, "Mrs. Holman" informed her of Tubman's appearance.
- ⁵² "Osgood to Child, June 2, 1859."
- ⁵³ "Osgood to Child, June 2, 1859."
- ⁵⁴ "Osgood to Child, June 2, 1859."
- ⁵⁵ For an excellent source on Sojourner Truth's life and the challenges to her womanhood, see Nell Irvin Painter, Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996).
- ⁵⁶ Painter, Truth. 178.
- ⁵⁷ Bradford, Scenes. 49. "Letter, Thomas Garrett to Sarah Bradford. June 1868."
- ⁵⁸ Cheney, "Moses."
- ⁵⁹ Mary Thatcher Higginson, ed., Letters and Journals of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 1846-1906 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921). 81.
- ⁶⁰ For an excellent analysis and discussion of Tubman's oral presentations and the resulting mediated texts written by white men and women, see Jean Humez, Harriet Tubman: The Life and Life Stories. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, forthcoming 2003).
- ⁶¹ "Letter, Franklin Sanborn to Friend [T.W. Higginson], June 4, 1859." Anti-slavery Collection. Ms.E.5.1 pt. 1 pg. 54. Boston Public Library. Boston.

⁶² "Letter, Sanborn to Higginson, June 4, 1859." See also, "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'." Franklin B. Sanborn Papers. Box 1, Folder 5. Box 1, Folder 5, American Antiquarian Society. Worcester, MA..

⁶³ Kenneth Walter Cameron, ed., Young Reporter of Concord: A Checklist of F.B. Sanborn's Letters to Benjamin Smith Lyman, 1853-1867, with Extracts Emphasizing Life and Literary Events in the World of Emerson, Thoreau and Alcott (Hartford, CT: Transcendental Books, 1978). 17

⁶⁴ "Letter, Maria Weston Chapman to Mrs. Arnold, June 4, 1859." Alma Lutz Collection. Schlesinger Library. Cambridge, MA. Winnebar Johnson fled from Samuel Harrington in the summer of 1854. He later settled in New Bedford, taking the name William. See Christian Recorder, July 7, 1866 – Johnson notice looking for his sisters Charlotte and Eleanor. See, also Winnebar Johnson runaway advertisement in Samuel Harrington, "\$250 Reward," *The Cambridge Democrat*, Cambridge, MD, June 17, 1854.

⁶⁵ "Letter, Chapman to Arnold, June 4, 1859."

⁶⁶ "Letter, Chapman to Arnold, June 4, 1859."

⁶⁷ Cheney, "Moses."

⁶⁸ Mary Thatcher Higginson, ed., Letters and Journals of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 1846-1906 (Boston: 1906). 81. "Letter, Higginson to L. Higginson, June 17, 1859."

⁶⁹ Higginson, ed., Letters. 81.

⁷⁰ Higginson, ed., Letters. 81.

⁷¹ Higginson, ed., Letters. 81.

⁷² Lewis Hayden and John S. Rock were both members of Boston's Vigilance Committee and Underground Railroad operators.

⁷³ James W. Yerrington, "The Fourth at Framingham," *The Liberator*, Boston, July 18, 1859.

⁷⁴ Yerrington, "Fourth."

⁷⁵ Yerrington, "Fourth."

⁷⁶ "Papers." Entry for July 6, 1859. See also, Green. "Tubman Home,"

⁷⁷ "The First of August Jubilees," *The Liberator*, Boston, August 26, 1859.

⁷⁸ "New England Convention of Colored Citizens," *The Liberator*, Boston, August 26, 1859.

⁷⁹ "Colored Convention."

⁸⁰ "Colored Convention."

⁸¹ "Rochester Records." "*8th Annual Report, 1859*," Treasurer's entry for Harriet Tubman, "\$2.00" on August 3. On August 11, John Brown Jr., (alias John Smith) wrote to his father (alias J. Henrie) that Douglass suggested that Tubman, "whose services might prove valuable, had better be helped on." See John Smith to J. Henrie, August 11, 1859, Sanborn, *Brown*. 536.

⁸² "Meetings in Boston," *The Liberator*, Boston, August 26, 1859.

⁸³ John Wheeler Clarkson, "An Annotated Checklist of the Letters of Franklin Benjamin Sanborn" (Columbia University, 1971). 68. Letter, Sanborn to John Brown, August 27, 1859 [held at the Pennsylvania Historical Society.] See also, U.S. Senate. "Report of the Select Committee of the Senate Appointed to Inquire into the Late Invasion and Seizure of the Public Property at Harper's Ferry," Mason Committee, Washington, D.C.: 1860.

⁸⁴ "Letter, Lewis Hayden to John Brown, September 16, 1859." *New York Herald*. New York.. This letter was published in the *Herald* after John Brown's failed raid on Harper's Ferry. It had been found among Brown's papers and was part of the evidence presented to the Mason Committee.

⁸⁵ "Letter, Franklin Sanborn to John Brown, September 23, 1859." *New York Herald*. New York. See also Mason Report. Tubman later told Martha Coffin Wright that Brown "wanted her to go with him, in his expedition, but when he sent a message for her, she was not at home." "Letter, M.C. Wright to W.L. Garrison II, Jan. 10, 1869."

⁸⁶ Dickson J. Preston, *Talbot County. A History*. (Centreville, MD: Tidewater Publishers, 1983). 205

⁸⁷ Oates, *Purge*. 290-302.

⁸⁸ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." See also, Bradford, *Scenes*. 83.

⁸⁹ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."

⁹⁰ Written by an amanuensis. I have not changed the wording, but I have added punctuation.

⁹¹ "Letter, John Stewart to Harriet Tubman, Nov. 1, 1859." Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society. 1:19. William Clements Library, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor,

Michigan.. It is unclear who "Brother John" is in this letter. The writer of the letter might have absentmindedly written "Brother John" in the third person, rather than maintaining a first person narrative. John could have recently returned from a trip to Troy, NY, where their cousin John Hooper lived, and where several other Eastern Shore former slaves were also living. Or the reference could be to John Bowley, who may have traveled to Troy from his home in Chatham, Ontario, Canada, to visit friends and relatives there, including several Bowleys. Catherine Stewart, the wife of James Stewart, had at least two children, Elijah and Hester. Since there is no mention of James, it is unclear where he was at this time. William Henry was then living at the corner of Geneva and North Streets in St. Catharines, and the Bowley's were still living in Chatham.

⁹² Tubman did not make another payment until January 7, 1860, when she paid a total of \$174.81 in interest and principle. See "Papers." And Green. "Tubman Home,"

⁹³ Cheney, "Moses."

⁹⁴ Cheney, "Moses."

⁹⁵ Bradford, Scenes. 54. Letter, Franklin Sanborn to Sarah Bradford, 1868.

⁹⁶ See James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988). 209-213.

⁹⁷ "Letter, M.C. Wright to W.L. Garrison II, Jan. 10, 1869."

⁹⁸ Oates, Purge. 359.

⁹⁹ "Letter, Franklin Sanborn to Friend, December 20, 1859." Anti-Slavery Collection. Ms.E.5.1 pt. 2 pg. 141. Boston Public Library. Boston.. Sanborn states that Tubman is at "83 Southac St."

¹⁰⁰ Tubman made another payment to Seward on January 7, 1860, when she paid a total of \$174.81 in interest and principle. See "Papers." ; and Green. "Tubman Home,"

¹⁰¹ Tubman and her family did not live in the house for most of 1860. See Bureau of the Census. United States Federal Census, 1860. Cayuga County, New York. They apparently returned the house in late winter or early spring 1861. See "Elijah R. Stewart, Citizenship Papers, October 23, 1888." United States Circuit Court, Boston. Boston. See also, "Letter, David Wright to Martha Coffin Wright, February 9, 1861." Garrison Family Papers. Box 42. F. 1043, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA; "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, December 30, 1860." Garrison Family Papers. Box 36. f. 948, SSCS.; "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Lucretia Coffin Mott, Fragment - February 1861." Garrison Family Papers. Box 37. f. 950, SSCS; "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Lucretia Coffin Mott, Nd. (Early February 1861)." Garrison Family Papers. Box 37. f. 950, SSCS.

¹⁰² "A Fugitive Slave from Harper's Ferry at Auburn - Narrow Escape from a United States Marshall," *New York Herald*, New York, January 21, 1860.

CHAPTER IX

FRACTURED FAMILY

The reality of Tubman's story is that it was all about family – her pursuit of her sister and brothers forced her to return time and time again to the Eastern Shore - and it was in a sense an unintended result of her failure to bring them away in a timely fashion that she brought away so many other runaway slaves, earning her the title “Moses.” Ultimately, Tubman's family story is in some ways representative of the many freedom seekers who fled North; while embracing liberty, it was often at the expense of leaving loved ones behind, a grim reality of the journey to freedom on the Underground Railroad.

Tubman did not, however, give up hope of reuniting her family. With her parents safely ensconced, once again, in St. Catharines, Tubman turned her thoughts to earning more money. She traveled to Syracuse, where the Rev. Samuel J. May, an anti-slavery colleague and friend of Gerrit Smith's, provided her with letters of introduction to anti-slavery supporters and societies in Central New York.¹ Beriah Green, a radical abolitionist and an early president of the Oneida Institute, an integrated “abolitionist” college in Whitesboro, N.Y., hosted a reception for Tubman on March 18, 1860.² He sent her on to New York Mills, a few miles east of Whitesboro, near Utica, the following day; he was hopeful she would receive a warm reception among friends there.³

At the end of April, Tubman found herself in the center of one of the most dramatic slave rescues to occur in Central New York since the “Jerry Rescue” of Syracuse in

1851.⁴ On April 27, 1860, Tubman was visiting with her cousin, John Hooper, in Troy, N.Y., as she passed through on her way to an anti-slavery meeting in Boston.⁵ It is likely that while there she intended to give a few lectures and raise some money, for Troy and its twin city of Albany had a very active and successful anti-slavery community, which supported a vigorous vigilance committee that sought to aid runaways and protect them from re-enslavement by slave-catchers and former masters.⁶ On the morning of the 27th, a young fugitive named Charles Nalle was arrested as he was walking to a local bakery to procure bread for the family of his employer, Uri Gilbert. Gilbert, a wealthy industrialist and anti-slavery activist in Troy, had recently hired Nalle to be his coachman, knowing full well Nalle's status as a runaway slave.⁷

Nalle had taken flight from enslavement in October 1858, from his slave master, Blucher Hansbrough of Culpepper County, Virginia. Married to a free woman and the father of six children, Nalle with his family fled to Columbia, Pennsylvania where they thought they might be safe. Feeling threatened, however, Nalle decided to head further North, while his wife pregnant wife stayed behind until he could settle someplace and send money to have them follow him. Finding safety in Troy, Nalle worked at various jobs trying to save enough money to bring his family north.

His wife in the meantime, was arrested and then jailed in Washington D.C. on suspicion of aiding Nalle's escape. Illiterate and dependent upon others to write and read for him, Nalle paid Horace Avril, a "shyster lawyer," from Troy to write letters for him to his wife and friends in the hope of securing his wife's freedom and his children's safe passage north. Avril betrayed Nalle, however, to Hansbrough, who, under the Fugitive Slave Act, procured a warrant for Nalle's arrest and return to Virginia.⁸

Nalle had been boarding with a prominent local black anti-slavery activist named William Henry, who ran a grocery store on Division Street in Troy.⁹ When Henry discovered Nalle had been arrested, he immediately alerted the black community and his white anti-slavery associates that Nalle was being held at the U.S. Commissioners office. Time was of the essence; Nalle was already being turned over to Hansbrough's agent, Henry Wall, without the benefit of a trial or hearing. While Martine I. Townsend, a prominent local attorney, set out to obtain a writ of *habeas corpus*, a crowd gathered outside the U.S. Commissioners office, then located on State Street in Troy at the Mutual Bank Building.

Tubman was only a short distance away when she heard the alarm and joined the crowd at the Commissioner's office. William Henry, Tubman, and others started to whip the growing crowd into a frenzy. They then settled on a plan with Henry and others to rescue Nalle from the agent. Acting the part of an old woman, Tubman stole inside the building to keep watch on the activities in the Commissioners office, where the police took no notice of her presence. As Sarah Bradford described it, "on the opposite side of the street stood the colored people, watching the window where they could see Harriet's sun-bonnet, and feeling assured that so long as she stood there, the fugitive was still in the office."¹⁰ The local newspaper noted a "somewhat antiquated colored woman," standing near the window, who was "provided with a signal to prepare those on the outside for an attack, when the prisoner should be brought forth."¹¹ But the police were wary of bringing Nalle out into the crowd. Someone shouted "fire," in hopes of forcing them to come out of the building, but it only served to create more confusion on the street.¹²

Finally, after hearing word that Townsend had obtained the writ of *habeas corpus*, the authorities decided to move Nalle a few blocks away to Judge Gould's office on Congress Street, where Townsend could argue his case for Nalle's release. Tubman gave the signal to the crowd below, then rushed down the stairs and made an attempt to wrestle Nalle from the grasp of the sheriff and his deputies as they were exiting the building. Hanging onto the neck of one officer, Tubman began choking him, but she was beaten back.¹³ Again she struck, hanging onto Nalle as the sheriff and other officers dragged him out of the building and into the angry crowd. Bradford has suggested that the sight of Nalle further enraged the crowd. He was apparently a very light skinned mulatto, "a tall, handsome, intelligent *white* man, with his wrists manacled together," who looked, according to Bradford, remarkably like his master.¹⁴ If Bradford's description of the reaction of the crowd when they spied Nalle for the first time, if accurate, reveals contemporary notions of color that equated slavery with black skin, not white skin.¹⁵

A fight ensued; Nalle and Tubman were dragged and beaten as the crowd tried to pry Nalle loose from the grip of the officers.¹⁶ A few voices in the crowd called out for calm; they urged the people to trust in the law to gain Nalle's freedom. But Tubman, among others, disagreed. Tubman was well known in the Troy community; word probably traveled quickly that it was she who was leading the charge, and many were eager and ready to followed her command. The Troy *Daily Times* reported, "the most conspicuous person opposed to the legal course was the venerable old colored woman, who exclaimed, 'Give us liberty or give us death!'"¹⁷

Pistols were drawn, and one officer threatened to kill a rescuer he had grabbed from the crowd; instantly a knife was drawn under the throat of the policeman, and the pistol

was dropped. "Twenty times the prisoner was taken from the officers, and twenty times they recovered him," the *Daily Times* reported.¹⁸ "Colored women rushed into the thickest of the fray; the venerable Moll Pitcher of the occasion fighting like a demon, and losing all her gearing save a dilapidated out-shirt."¹⁹ Bradford later wrote that Tubman "cried to her friends: 'Drag us out! Drag him to the river! Drown him! but don't let them have him!'"²⁰ One man offered two hundred dollars for Nalle's rescue, "but not one cent to his master!"²¹ The crowd carried both Tubman and Nalle, who was by then wearing Tubman's bonnet, down Congress Street toward the riverfront. Two men had gone ahead to secure a boat at the docks, near the foot of Washington Street, to carry Nalle across the Hudson River to West Troy. Tubman let go of him when they reached the docks, and he was placed on the boat, still shackled, and taken to the other side.²²

The officers, who had been held back by the crowd, soon found their way to the waterfront and boarded a ferry with about "300 of the rescuers."²³ Police officials in West Troy had been notified by telegraph of Nalle's escape and were prepared to capture him when he landed. Bleeding profusely from his head, arms and hands, where the handcuffs remained locked around his wrists, Nalle tried to run from the awaiting officers, but was seized and taken to Judge Stewart's chambers near the ferry terminal on West Troy's waterfront. Tubman, the other rescuers, and Troy's sheriff and deputies landed soon after. Racing for the judge's office nearby, the crowd was joined by sympathizers from West Troy. Officers guarding the judge's chambers fired upon the first rescuers storming the building; several were shot, driving the crowd out of the building and back onto the street. The sight of wounded men infuriated some in the crowd, and another attempt was made to storm the building. "More stones and more

pistol-shots ensued,” and finally the door to the judge’s chamber was forced open by an “immense negro” named Martin, who was immediately “felled by a hatchet in the hands of Deputy Sheriff Morrison.”²⁴ Stunned, but not fatally, Martin lay unconscious in the doorway, blocking attempts by the sheriff and others to close the door. “Harriet and a number of other colored women rushed” over Martin and the bodies of the other wounded rescuers to reach Nalle.²⁵

Tubman later told young audiences that she threw Nalle “acrossed my shoulder like a bag o’ meal and took him away out of there.”²⁶ Down the stairs the women ran, “bullets whistling past” them as they emerged onto the street. A farmer passing close by was “compelled” to give up his horse and wagon for Nalle’s escape; the wagon broke apart, however, a few blocks away, necessitating a transfer to another horse and wagon.²⁷ Nalle successfully made his escape from the authorities; while the newspapers reported that he was safe in Canada, he was, in fact, hiding in the countryside.²⁸ Through the effort of the local anti-slavery community in Troy and Albany Nalle’s freedom was purchased from Hansbrough, and he was able to return to Troy.²⁹

Tubman slipped back into the crowd once Nalle was out of sight. She had been badly beaten; she was bruised and bloody and her clothes were torn and tattered. National newspapers picked up the story. Anti-slavery societies celebrated the successful rescue, crediting not only “many of our most respectable citizens, - lawyers, editors, public men, and private individuals,” but “the rank and file, [who] were black... African fury is entitled to claim the greatest share in the rescue.”³⁰ Ednah Cheney later wrote of the Troy event, remarking that Tubman was “perfectly at home in such scenes; she loves action,” and “does not dislike fighting in a good cause.”³¹ Tubman’s role, however, “was

in the sight of a thousand, perhaps of five thousand spectators,” Martin Townsend would later tell Bradford, once again testifying to her persistent and unwavering efforts in the pursuit of freedom.³²

Later, Tubman made her way to Boston, where she attended the memorial funeral of Theodore Parker, who had died on May 10th in Italy. Visiting with Sanborn in Concord in June, she probably delighted him with tales of the Nalle rescue. She is “an extraordinary person,” he wrote his friend Benjamin Lyman.³³ Throughout the summer of 1860, Tubman continued to visit and speak at small anti-slavery meetings, intimate parlor gatherings, and at larger, more public venues. On July 4 she spoke at a woman’s suffrage meeting held at the Melodeon Hall in Boston. “A colored woman of the name of Moses,” the *Liberator* reported the next day, “who, herself a fugitive, has eight times returned to the slave States for the purpose of rescuing others from bondage, and who has met with extraordinary success in her efforts,” told the audience of “her adventures in a modest but quaint and amusing style, which won much applause.”³⁴ Joining Tubman were some of Boston’s and New England’s women’s rights vanguard: Caroline Dall, Caroline Severance, Helen Garrison, Samuel May, James Freeman Clark, and Wendell Phillips, among others.³⁵

Southerners were taking notice, however. For how long Tubman’s activities were known to Eastern Shore slaveholders has not been recorded. John Bell Robinson, a pro-slavery writer in Philadelphia, noted in 1860 that Harriet Tubman had been featured as “A Female Conductor on the Underground Railroad,” at the meeting at the Melodeon in July. He was horrified, he told his readers, that she was applauded for bringing her parents “away from ease and comfortable homes” where they had been “caressed and

better taken care of... around the plentiful board of their master.”³⁶ For Bell, Tubman was an “ignorant woman, ... [who] must have been persuaded and bewildered by flattery by some fiendish source, or she certainly would not have been guilty of such a diabolical act of wickedness and cruelty to her parents, who had a fortune laid up for old age.”³⁷ He argued further that Tubman’s “cruelty” to her parents was “a thousand times worse than to sell young ones away!”³⁸ No doubt, Ben and Rit, and many other slaves, would have disagreed on that point.

Despite her growing notoriety and the risks it brought to her, Tubman continued to appear in public, telling her audiences of her life in slavery, her escape and rescue missions, earning as much money as she could to support herself, her family, and other runaways families living in St. Catharines. Tubman may have been having a difficult time earning enough money to meet all of her obligations. Trying to support her parents, herself, various fugitive relief activities in St. Catharines, as well as repay her debt to Seward for her house, required a constant effort and apparently was not entirely successful. By August 1860 Tubman had not made a single payment to Seward since the prior January. Interest was accruing monthly, and property taxes and insurance payments added to her debt obligation; Seward, however, made sure the taxes and insurance were paid on the property. Perhaps Seward was distracted with his own battles. He was, that summer, fighting a political battle at the Republican National Convention in Chicago, hoping to secure his party’s nomination for the presidency. Abraham Lincoln, a more moderate candidate, won the ballot, instead, and Seward committed himself to support Lincoln’s campaign for election in November.³⁹

Even though Tubman's debt continued to grow, Seward was patient, as there is no indication he pressured her to make payments at that time.⁴⁰ She, therefore, could focus on earning the \$100 she needed to fund another trip back to the Eastern Shore to retrieve her sister, Rachael, and Rachael's two children, Angerine and Ben. In early August Tubman sent a letter to Wendell Phillips, requesting money from him, money that he had apparently promised her some time before then. "I am about to start on my mission," she told Phillips, "you promised if I would let you know in case I did not make off my \$100... I lack after paying my board 19 or \$20 of that amount."⁴¹ She asked him to forward the money to "Mr. Walcott," who was probably Robert F. Walcott, manager and business agent for *The Liberator*, who was to forward the money to Tubman once she reached Philadelphia.⁴² As a reminder of her sometimes-unpredictable health, she added a closing line: "I am as well as usual for me to be and in good spirits."⁴³

When Tubman actually made it back to the Eastern Shore is unknown. But on December 1st, Thomas Garrett wrote to William Still that Harriet had arrived, alone, at his home the evening before. She had left two men, Stephen Ennals and another named John, near New Castle; the roads were dangerous and she felt it unsafe to bring them to Wilmington.⁴⁴ Garrett paid someone to find them and take them to Chester County in Pennsylvania, and he gave Harriet thirty dollars to travel back thirty miles to the place she had secreted Maria Ennals, Stephens' wife, and their three children, Harriet, Amanda and a three month old infant.⁴⁵ There, she hired a "man with a carriage, to take them to Chester County."⁴⁶

Bringing away the Ennals family was probably a last minute decision for Harriet. Her every intention had been the retrieval of her sister Rachael and Rachel's two

children, the very last of the Brodess's slaves. Unfortunately, Rachel had "died a little before Harriet reached her neighborhood," news that Tubman had not received before she returned to the Eastern Shore.⁴⁷ Ednah Cheney later wrote that Tubman "had to leave her sister's two orphaned children in slavery the last time, for the want of thirty dollars."⁴⁸ It is possible that, although she was successful in bringing away the Ennals family, she may have needed more money to bribe or pay someone else to bring the children to her.⁴⁹ The sequence of events is unclear, however. Bradford later wrote that on Tubman's last trip, the runaways "were to meet her in a wood, that she might conduct them North. For some unexplained reason they did not come." Tubman spent a final night, Bradford later wrote, waiting hopefully, in a "blinding snow storm and a raging wind. She protected herself behind a tree as well as she could," leaving herself "exposed to the fury of the storm."⁵⁰ Restrictions on liberties were still being strictly enforced on the Eastern Shore; slave patrols and slave catchers continued to monitor and watch movements in the countryside.⁵¹ Whatever happened during the attempted rescue of the children, the outcome remained unchanged – Angerine and Ben remained enslaved in Dorchester County.

Tubman could not linger to wait for the right moment to get the children; she knew from years of experience that chance may not come. Whether the Ennals' were part of Tubman's original rescue plan is not known, but the Ennals family was ready to go, so Tubman started toward Wilmington with them, intending perhaps to turn around and try again later for her niece and nephew.⁵³ According to William Still, Stephen was owned by "John Kaiger," who was most likely either James Craig, from Madison, or John E. Cator, from the Parson's Creek District.⁵⁴ "Algier Percy," who was actually Algernon

Percy, of Vienna, owned Maria and their children.⁵⁵ Maria “hired her time,” but still lived eight miles from her husband, who was not allowed by his master to live with her.

Sarah Bradford wrote in her second biography of Tubman of an escape sequence that may have been this particular rescue. It seems that Tubman brought her party of runaways to the home of a black man she knew to be an Underground Railroad stationmaster. Arriving in the rain during the early morning hours, “Harriet went to the door, and gave the peculiar rap which was her customary signal to her friends.”⁵⁶ After knocking on the door several times with no response, Tubman became alarmed. Her answer came in the form of “the head of a *white man*,” who appeared at the window, “with the gruff question, ‘Who are you?’ and ‘What do you want?’” Tubman soon learned that her black friend had been “obliged to leave for harboring” fugitive slaves.⁵⁷

The Underground network had disintegrated considerably on the Eastern Shore due to increased vigilance on the part of the slaveholders and local authorities since the great numbers of escapes in the fall of 1857. Several known and unknown agents had been caught and jailed, chased out of the area, or possibly even killed. Though Tubman was probably fully aware of some of these arrests and the disruption it caused to the operations of the network, she may not have known the fates of some of her allies who helped her on her missions. Finding herself caught off-guard by the white man living in a former black occupied Underground Railroad safe house put Tubman and her party of runaways at greater risk of exposure. She hurried them to the outskirts of the town, where “there was a little island in a swamp, where the grass grew tall and rank, and where no human being could be suspected of seeking a hiding place.” Wading through the water to the island, carrying the “well drugged” baby in a basket, the group laid

quietly in the “wet grass” where they prayed “and waited for deliverance.”⁵⁸ They were hotly pursued; patrols passed by, searching nearby homes and fields for the runaways, making it difficult for them to get to the next Underground Railroad station. They were hungry and cold; the baby had to be drugged with paregoric to keep it quiet as they hid among the tall marsh grasses.

Eventually a Quaker man appeared, “slowly walking along the solid pathway on the edge of the swamp.”⁵⁹ Tubman and the others, thinking he was “talking to himself,” finally realized he was giving them instructions to get to his nearby barn, where a horse and a wagon, filled with provisions, were waiting for them. A seemingly miraculous answer to Tubman’s prayer, Bradford later wrote, “never seemed to strike her as at all strange or mysterious; her prayer was the prayer of faith, and she *expected* an answer.”⁶⁰

Tubman guided them to the next town, to the safety of another Quaker she knew, who sheltered them and sent them along to the next station.⁶¹ The trip was long and cold, though; with only an “old comfort [and] blanket,” and “a basket with a little kindling, a little bread for the baby with some laudanum, to keep it from crying during the day,” Martha Coffin Wright wrote to her daughter Ellen Wright Garrison. Tubman and the group “walked all night, carrying the little ones, and spread the comfort on the frozen ground, in some dense thicket, where they all hid.”⁶²

The journey took some time to complete because of the intense scrutiny and the vigorous searches being conducted in the pursuit of these runaways. They had to hide in the woods longer than Tubman anticipated; they were “famished,” so Tubman attempted to find food.⁶³ While the refugees were secreted in the woods, Tubman “went out foraging, and sometimes could not get back till dark, fearing she would be followed.

Then if they had crept further in, and she couldn't find them, she would whistle, or sing certain hymns and they would answer."⁶⁴

Bradford recorded these songs, "as I have so often heard them sung by herself

[Tubman]:

Hail, oh hail, ye happy spirits,
 Death no more shall make you fear,
 Grief nor sorrow, pain nor anguish,
 Shall no more distress you dere.
 Around Him are ten thousand angels,
 Always ready to obey command;
 Dey are always hovering round you,
 Till you reach de heavenly land.
 Jesus, Jesus will go wid you,
 He will lead you to his throne;
 He who died, has gone before you,
 Trod de wine-press all alone.
 He whose thunders shake creation,
 He who bids de planets roll;
 He who rides upon the tempest,
 And whose scepter sways de whole.
 Dark; and thorny is de pathway,
 Where de pilgrim makes his ways;
 But beyond dis vale of sorrow,
 Lie de fields of endless days."⁶⁵

Tubman's instructed her party not to come out of their hiding places until she had sung the song twice. If it was too dangerous for them to come out, she would sing:

Moses go down in Egypt,
 Till ole Pharo' let me go;
 Hadn't been for Adam's fall,
 Shouldn't hab to died at all"⁶⁶

But, once danger had passed then she would change the song to a joyous refrain, which, Bradford wrote, was "forbidden to her people at the South."

Oh go down, Moses,
 Way down into Egypt's land,
 Tell old Pharaoh,
 Let my people go.

Oh Pharaoh said he would go cross,
 Let my people go,
 And don't get lost in de wilderness,
 Let my people go.
 Oh go down, Moses,
 Way down into Egypt's land,
 Tell old Pharaoh,
 Let my people go.
 You may hinder me here, but you can't up dere,
 Let my people go,
 He sits in de Hebben and answers prayer,
 Let my people go!
 Oh go down, Moses,
 Way down into Egypt's land,
 Tell old Pharaoh,
 Let my people go."⁶⁷

Eventually, they made it to Wilmington. Maria and the children were separated from Stephen and John, safely hidden among Tubman's friends "thirty miles below" Wilmington, until she could secure transportation for the trip to Garrett's house.⁶⁸ While at Garret's house, another runaway from Baltimore, a young woman "in a delicate state," arrived.⁶⁹ She joined Tubman and the rest as made their way to William Still's office in Philadelphia. Marveling at Tubman's continued success, Garrett wrote Still that Harriet "seems to have had a special angel to guard her on her journey of mercy."⁷⁰

In Philadelphia, Still reported that the group was given food, clothing and money, and sent along to Canada. In his book, The Underground Railroad Still apologized for his brief commentary and lack of details on Tubman's "last" rescue mission. The "capture of John Brown's papers and letters, with names and plans in full, admonished us that such papers and correspondence as had been preserved concerning the Underground Rail Road," were vulnerable to discovery and exposure, putting the operation at too great a risk.⁷¹ In fact, Still and his partner McKim had taken the precaution at the time of Brown's trial to hide some of the Vigilance Committee's journals and correspondence in

a nearby cemetery. Afterwards, Still “omitted some of the most important particulars in the escapes and narratives of fugitives,” and often the “records were kept simply on loose slips of paper.”⁷²

It took some time for Tubman and the rest to reach Canada. On December 30, Martha Coffin Wright in Auburn reported to her daughter Ellen in Boston that she and other Auburnians had “been expending our sympathies, as well as congratulations, on seven newly arrived slaves that Harriet Tubman has just pioneered safely from the Southern part of Maryland.”⁷³ News traveled quickly that Tubman had made another successful trip. The news of her sister’s death was also widely reported, indicating how much many of the white abolitionists knew about Tubman’s family and her plans. There was probably great grief and disappointment in her own household; Ben and Rit had lost another daughter, and their grandchildren remained enslaved while others made their way to freedom. It must have been incredibly frustrating for all of them, but they may have continued to hope that Harriet would try again once she regained her strength.

Many were deeply concerned for her continued safety, though, and that of her refugees. Frank Sanborn wrote inquiring letters to Central New York friends as to Harriet’s whereabouts. In late January 1861, D.C. Collins reported to him that Tubman had not been seen for “two or three weeks—but she is so very erratic in her movements.”⁷⁴ Collins informed Sanborn that while they were “much pleased that Harriet succeeded in assisting even a few of her suffering friends to escape from bondage... her sister was not among the number, she having been released from her labors some time since by that friend of the poor slave, the Angel of Death.”⁷⁵ Gerrit Smith finally wrote to Sanborn on January 29th that Tubman “sits by my side... she

returned Christmas from another of her southern expeditions, bringing with her 7 slaves. But her sister, after whom she went, was not among them. She died a little before Harriet reached her neighborhood.”⁷⁶ Tubman had been staying with his family for five days, and he expected her to stay several more; she had “badly frosted” her feet while on her last mission. Tubman wanted Sanborn to know, Smith wrote, that “her father has a lame hand,” possibly a message that they were in need of help.⁷⁷

In spite of the continuing threats to her safety while on U.S. soil, Tubman seemed relaxed and at ease at the Smith’s residence, “the Big House,” as Tubman called it.⁷⁸ She found great comfort and a warm welcome from Gerrit Smith and his family. It was probably this respite at the Smith’s that Tubman later recalled fondly to an interviewer; Green, Smith’s son, invited Tubman to go hunting with him, but her shoes had been ruined and she could not go. “I remember,” Tubman recalled, “once after I had brought some colored people from the South... Gerrit Smith’s son, Green, was going hunting with his tutor and some other boys. I had no shoes. It was a Saturday afternoon and – would you believe it? – those boys went right off to the village and got me a pair of shoes so I could go with them.”⁷⁹ The interviewer, James B. Clark, noted “in those days Harriet was equally skilled with a gun or a hoe, in the laundry or the kitchen.”⁸⁰

In early February, however, the issue of Tubman’s safety reached a crisis point. David Wright had received a letter from a fellow abolitionist, Chas. Mills in Syracuse, who informed him that a “a slaveholder was there the day before enquiring as to the possibility of retaking slaves here [Auburn].”⁸¹ Mills told Wright to warn all the fugitives there; the presence of slave catchers was a reminder of the precarious situation fugitives faced trying to live their lives in the North. There had already been several

narrow escapes in the Auburn area.⁸² This new warning, however, heightened the sense of danger for Harriet, her family, and friends. Wright (who had been traveling in New York or Washington at the time) wrote to Martha that he had “immediately called on several whom I knew could be trusted, on ---- men amongst others, who promised to warn Harriet and her children.”⁸³ Wright sent Mills’s letter to Mr. Hosmer [first name?], the editor of the local newspaper in Auburn, who in turn rode out to Tubman’s house on South Street and read it to Tubman’s parents.⁸⁴ Martha Wright suspected that Tubman had already gone on to Canada with Gerrit Smith, and she was right.⁸⁵

There were other reasons to be concerned for Tubman’s safety. In November 1860 Lincoln had been elected President. While Lincoln prepared to take office in March 1861, Seward was working on a compromise to avoid secession. Seward was in line to be appointed Lincoln’s Secretary of State, and in that position, Seward hoped to have a powerful influence on the administration’s policies toward the South and resolving the sectional crisis. Though a devoted anti-slavery man, Seward was also a strict Unionist, and he was determined to maintain the Union without resorting to war, a position that he stood firm, on even if that meant making concessions to southern states threatening to secede from the Union. To his long time abolitionist friends, Seward suddenly appeared all too willing to accept compromises that many anti-slavery activists like Smith, Garrison, Sanborn, Higginson, and others were loathe to support. Sacrificing liberty for African Americans still enslaved in the South was intolerable, his critics argued, and they turned away from Seward, thinking he was a traitor to the cause.

Adding to the sense of urgency was the decision by seven southern states, South Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, Georgia, Alabama, Florida and Texas in February 1861

to pass resolutions to secede from the Union.⁸⁶ Tubman's friends and allies became increasingly concerned that Seward himself, hoping to compromise and bargain his way back to reunification, might betray her. Sanborn later wrote:

Seward knew the history of this poor woman, he had given his enemies a handle against him by dealing with her, it was thought that he would not scruple to betray her. The suspicion was an unworthy one, for though the Secretary could betray a cause, he could not surely have put her enemies on the track of a woman who was thus in his power, after such a career as hers had been. But so little confidence was then felt in Mr. Seward, by men who had voted for him and with him, that they hurried Harriet off to Canada, sorely against her will.⁸⁷

Indeed, on February 3, 1861, Gerrit Smith left Peterboro for Canada, taking Tubman with him. A recent slave case in Ohio, where a fugitive slave named Lucy had been returned to her master under the Fugitive Slave Act, had shaken Smith's confidence in the justice system, and that combined with anger and suspicion toward Seward made him "alarmed" for Tubman's safety.⁸⁸ Chas. Mills in Syracuse informed Martha Wright of Tubman's whereabouts, and he asked that Wright "see that the family did not suffer, [and] a message came from her, thro' her favorite slave, desiring that we [would] send them a bbl of flour [and] she [would] pay us on her return."⁸⁹ Tubman's family remained in Auburn; why they were not taken back to Canada for safety is not known. Tubman's notoriety as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, especially since she had been lecturing in public in New England for nearly two years, probably made her a choice target. Though a reward notice for Tubman's capture has yet to be found, it is likely that there was one; whether it was \$1200, \$12,000, or the unlikely \$40,000, Tubman would have been a significant "catch" for southern bounty hunters.

For how long Harriet stayed in St. Catharines is unknown, though Sanborn suggested it was not for very long.⁹⁰ With part of her family in Auburn and the rest in Canada,

Tubman most likely spent time in both places in the spring of 1861. Smith, Sanborn, and other allies continued to raise money for her, sending it to her in small installments of \$10 and \$20 at a time.⁹¹ They had become, apparently, concerned over her ability to manage the money in a way they deemed best. Sarah Bradford later wrote that Tubman's "heart is so large, and her feelings are so easily wrought upon, that it was never wise to give her more than enough for present needs."⁹² What Tubman may have thought was an appropriate use of the money may have differed from what white benefactors envisioned was worthy. Because we lack any documentation from Tubman herself, we are left to speculate that perhaps Tubman's supporters were influenced in part by paternalistic attitudes toward her and that she may have really needed guidance with respect to finances.

Tubman's burdens remained great, however. By April, Catharine Stewart, the wife of James Stewart, Tubman's brother, and their son Elijah, moved from St. Catharines to Tubman's home in Auburn, crowding the small home even more.⁹³ Bradford wrote that Tubman's mother "was querulous and exacting, and most unreasonable in her temper, often reproaching this faithful daughter as the Israelites did of Moses of old, for 'bringing them up into the wilderness to die there of hunger.'"⁹⁴ John Stewart procured work as a laborer, or possibly as a coachman or a "teamster," but the whereabouts of Catherine's husband, James, remains a mystery.⁹⁵

Nearly seventy-five years old, Ben was probably unable to work much; that left Catherine and thirty-nine-year old Harriet the only other wage earners in the household. Harriet's mother, Rit, spent some time with the Smiths in Peterboro; Tubman may have asked her friends to care for her aging parents, away from the crowded household in

Auburn.⁹⁶ Funds from supportive anti-slavery friends helped the family survive through the winter, spring and summer, when they could plant some crops in hopes of a good fall harvest to see them through the next winter.

Traveling throughout New England raising money, checking in on her family in Auburn, and visiting refugees in St. Catharines, Tubman had a particularly active spring and summer. Sometime during that time period she established a relief organization in St. Catharines to aid needy fugitives living there.⁹⁷ Continued frustration with Hiram Wilson and his relief work may have forced Tubman to establish her own organization with people she knew and trusted. Called the “Fugitive Aid Society of St. Catharine’s,” the association was run by several runaways from Maryland and Delaware. Charles H. Hall, President, had run away from Maryland twenty-five years before; Benjamin Fletcher, Vice President, had only arrived in 1859; Christopher “Kit” Anthony, Secretary, was one of the 28 fugitives who had run away from Dorchester County in October 1857; H. W. Wilkins [Wilkinson], Assistant Secretary, had left Dorchester County, in February 1858, with a party of five other men, all of whom settled in the St. Catharines area.⁹⁸ A fifth man, William Hutchinson, served as Treasurer for the newly formed society. Tubman, her brother William Henry Stewart, John Jones, and Hutchinson’s wife, Mary, served as the society’s Committee. Vowing to serve “fugitive slaves as may be suffering from sickness or destitution” in St. Catharines, the Fugitive Aid Society assured its potential donors that the association “may be relied on as worthy of confidence by those who wish to help the fugitives in Canada.”⁹⁹ Rev. William Burns collected donations of “clothing or money” in St. Catharines, while Robert F. Walcutt, business agent and manager of *The Liberator*, and a friend of Tubman’s, collected donations in Boston for

the Society.¹⁰⁰ Ironically, when Horatio Wilkins (or Wilkinson) passed through William Still's office in February 1858, he told Still that his master, Thomas Hodges (or Hodson) had visited Canada and upon returning, told his slaves that Canada was "the meanest part of the globe" he had ever seen. Hodson told them that he had not seen one black person; a "custom-house" official informed him that all the runaway slaves had been sent "round Cape Horn" and sold. Just in case his slaves still doubted him, Hodson told them "the suffering from deep snows and starvation was fearful."¹⁰¹ Though Horatio told Still he knew it was all a lie, little did he know that he and other runaways would indeed face some harsh conditions in Canada.

Tubman remained primarily with her family in Auburn and in Canada throughout the summer months of 1861. Sanborn had been expecting Tubman to appear in Boston that fall; she probably did arrive at some point, seeking to raise more money for another trip to Maryland to retrieve her sister's children, possibly before the threat of war would make the journey impossible to complete.¹⁰² She had felt, like many people, that the country was headed for a profound and lengthy war. Tubman, Bradford later wrote, had a vision that the slaves would be emancipated.¹⁰³ During a visit with Henry Highland Garnet, a prominent New York black abolitionist, Tubman told him of her vision. He did not believe that they would see it happen in their lifetimes, nor during the lives of his grandchildren. No, she told him, "you'll see it, and you'll see it soon. My people are free! My people are free."¹⁰⁴ It was not long after, in April 1861, when shots were exchanged for the first time at Fort Sumter, the federal garrison located in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina. After two days of heavy bombardment of the garrison, the

federal commander, Major Anderson, surrendered the fort to the Confederate commander in Charleston, General Beauregard. The Civil War had begun.¹⁰⁵

Maryland, however, had not seceded from the Union, and Lincoln was determined to prevent it from doing so. In the middle of April, a Massachusetts regiment marching through Baltimore was attacked by an angry secessionist mob. Additional Union troops were sent in to protect rail lines and major thoroughfares; the pressure resulted in Maryland's legislature voting in May to remain within the Union. Though southern sympathies ran strong in Maryland, particularly on the Eastern Shore, pro-union factions soon dominated.¹⁰⁶

Reaction to the sectional crisis on the Eastern Shore was divided. Fears of slave insurrection on the Eastern Shore dominated correspondence between Governor Thomas H. Hicks and Union General Butler in April.¹⁰⁷ Maryland had a much smaller slave population and smaller slaveholding class, and a much larger free black population, than its recently seceded Confederate neighbors. Maryland slaves, perhaps sensing a moment of opportunity in the confusion, started to run away again in higher numbers than before.¹⁰⁸ By late fall, Sanborn reported to Benjamin Lyman in Philadelphia that Harriet had told him that the number of slaves escaping from Maryland and Virginia was "unusually great."¹⁰⁹

Though Union regiments were quickly formed on the Eastern Shore, Governor Hicks was particularly concerned about the strong support for the Confederacy manifesting itself there. He asked the federal government for more assistance in the form of arms and supplies to raise more regiments and to root out the "secessionists that are now passing in great numbers through [there] to the Eastern Shore of Virginia," where they were joining

Confederate regiments.¹¹⁰ Perhaps because of this uncertainty in Maryland, Tubman never made the trip to rescue her niece and nephew.

Nevertheless, on November 7, 1861, the Union Navy captured two forts at the mouth of Port Royal Bay, on the southeastern coast of South Carolina. Confederate forces and many civilians fled from the area, leaving behind plantations, storehouses, and slaves.¹¹¹ Encompassing the Sea Islands and the whole Port Royal district, including Hilton Head Island, St. Helena's Island, and Beaufort districts, Union forces claimed a vital position from which to launch offensive raids throughout the region. A military zone was established, called the Department of the South, which encompassed South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Within a very short period of time, Tubman found herself swept up into war related activities, forcing her to put aside her own plans and focus on helping the Union cause in the South.

Many of the thousands of slaves left behind, or who ran away in the confusion when their owners abandoned their farms and plantations in the Port Royal District, sought shelter behind Union lines. Early in the war, in places where Union troops were encamped (Washington, D.C., North Carolina and Virginia, for example), slaves from surrounding communities often attempted to flee to the protection of Union lines, only to be turned away or forced back to their owners.¹¹² Lincoln and his administration were not ready to make the war about emancipation; they wanted Southern states to return to the Union, and the issue of the abolishment of slavery to be addressed at a later time.¹¹³ But by the summer of 1861, General Butler, then at Fortress Monroe in Virginia, decided that slaves, who were considered property by their Confederate owners, could be taken into Union camps under his control, ostensibly under war resolutions allowing for the

confiscation of rebel property. He called these fugitive slaves flooding to Union lines, “contrabands of war.”¹¹⁴ It did not become an official Union policy until March 1862 when a new guideline was passed, specifying that no Union officer could return a fugitive slave to its owner.¹¹⁵ Major General David Hunter, a staunch abolitionist who had been assigned command of the Department in South Carolina, went one step further and in mid-April declared all slaves within his jurisdiction free.¹¹⁶ President Lincoln, however, revoked Hunter’s order, infuriating abolitionists throughout the North. Though Hunter effectively ignored the revocation in practice, Lincoln’s policy remained in effect until the Emancipation Proclamation was issued on January 1, 1863.¹¹⁷

The issue of what to do with all the “contrabands” flooding Union encampments became an immediate concern after the Port Royal district was secured. General Thomas W. Sherman ordered that former slaves in area be hired to work in the camps in whatever capacity was needed.¹¹⁸ He later wrote the War Department, requesting teachers be sent from the north to help educate and train the many former slaves seeking help from the Union army. He also requested that agents be sent “to take charge of the plantations and superintend the work of the blacks until they [can] provide for themselves.”¹¹⁹ Further appeals went out to northern churches and anti-slavery and relief societies for clothing, books, money, other supplies and volunteers.¹²⁰

Boston abolitionists were among the first to respond. Though the federal government was slow to devise a policy to deal with “contrabands,” abolitionists throughout the North were eager to fill this gap. They immediately established organizations and societies to provide for the needs of newly freed slaves. Boston, New York, and Philadelphia set up educational and relief associations within weeks of each

other in the early months of 1862.¹²¹ Meetings were held in Boston, privately and publicly, calling for volunteers, money and supplies to be sent to the various Union encampments in the south. Tubman, who appears to have been in New England throughout that fall, “conceived of the idea of going there and working among her people,” Sanborn later wrote.¹²² She was irritated by Lincoln’s position regarding contrabands and his refusal to abolish slavery.¹²³ If Lincoln would not help, then she would do what she could do to help.

Money was needed; she lectured at various places, including the Twelfth Baptist Church in Boston where “a donation festival took place... the pecuniary result of which was not large.”¹²⁴ Through her contacts with William Lloyd Garrison, George L. Stearns, Elbridge B. Dudley, and others, Tubman was introduced to Massachusetts Governor John Andrew, who made arrangements for her to sail to Beaufort, South Carolina, headquarters for the Department of the South at Port Royal, to begin her work there.¹²⁵ Tubman probably returned to Auburn to make arrangements for the care of her elderly parents and others living in her house there; indeed, Ednah Cheney reported that the “only condition she made was that her old parents should be kept from want... with what shrewd economy she... planned all their household arrangements. She concluded that thirty dollars would keep them comfortable through the winter.”¹²⁶

The care and support of her parents was not Tubman’s only worry. Sometime before May, and before she left for Port Royal, Tubman brought a little girl named Margaret Stewart to live with Lazette Worden, William H. Seward’s sister-in-law, the sister of his wife Frances. As Martha Coffin Wright reported, “Mrs. Worden... has taken a contraband 10 yrs. old, to live with her, a niece of Harriet Tubman.”¹²⁷ Though Lazette

Worden had her own home in Auburn, she often stayed for extended periods at the Seward residence, especially when William was away in Washington, D.C. and Frances was left behind at home.¹²⁸ Frances Seward, a devout abolitionist who had sheltered slaves in her home during the 1850s, was part of the close circle of white supporters who helped and admired Tubman.¹²⁹ It appears that it was to the Seward home that Lazette Worden brought Margaret to live.

The identity and exact relationship of this little girl, Margaret, to Tubman is mysterious and seemingly complicated. Margaret's daughter, Alice Lucas Brickler, recalled to Tubman's biographer Earl Conrad many years later that her mother was "Aunt Harriet's favorite niece," a description that was confirmed to Conrad by another close friend of Tubman's, Florence Carter.¹³⁰ "My Mother's life," Brickler told Conrad, "really began with Aunt Harriet kidnapping her from her home on the Eastern Shore of Maryland when she was a little girl about eight or nine years old."¹³¹ According to Brickler, Margaret had never been a slave. Her mother and her brothers were free as well, and her father was one of Harriet's brothers, "an ex-slave." Margaret's memories of her Maryland home were vague, however, but she told her daughter Alice that she remembered that the family owned "a slick pair of chestnut horses and a shiny carriage in which they rode to church. That was all she remembered of her home."

Her next memory was of Aunt Harriet's visit to the home. She fell in love with the little girl who was my mother. Maybe it was because in Mother she saw the child she herself might [have] been if slavery had been less cruel. Maybe it was because she knew the joys of motherhood would never be hers and she longed for some little creature who would love her for her own self's sake. Certainly whatever the emotion, it was stronger than her better judgment for when her visit was ended; she, secretly and without so much as a by-your-leave, took the little girl with her to her northern home.¹³²

They took a water route north, sailing on a “steamer ” which impressed Margaret “so greatly that she forgot to weep over her separation from her twin brother, her mother & the shiny carriage she liked so much.”¹³³ Brickler found this “kidnapping” as confusing as her mother apparently did. She speculated to Conrad that Tubman “must have regretted her act for she knew she had taken the child from a sheltered good home to a place where there was nobody to care for her.” Taking Margaret from her home on the Eastern Shore to live with her in the north did not “calm [Tubman’s] restless soul and turn her into a domestic.” Tubman had, in Brickler’s view, “violated her brother’s home & sorrow & anger were there.”¹³⁴ Tubman, Brickler believed (and rightfully so), was too busy to care for Margaret, so she “gave the little girl, my mother to Mrs. William H. Seward, the governor’s wife... [who] brought up mother – not as a servant but as a guest within her home.”¹³⁵ Though Tubman left Margaret with Lazette Worden, she was ostensibly raised in the Seward home.¹³⁶ Margaret was taught to “speak properly, to read, write, sew, do housework and act as a lady.”¹³⁷

Margaret’s parentage remains a mystery, though there are some clues. Tubman did not have a free brother; Edward Brodess had enslaved all of them. One of her brothers, probably Ben, (later named James Stewart,) left behind two boys, Benjamin and David, when he ran away from Dorchester County in 1854. The boys were free; they were indentured to John D. Parker in May 1857, and those records reveal that their unidentified mother was free.¹³⁸ The indenture record indicates that Benjamin was eight years old in 1857, placing his birth somewhere around 1849.¹³⁹ He could be the “twin” that Margaret left behind. Tubman’s brother, Ben, however, ran away in December 1854, leaving behind his children, which then leaves the question of who was taking care of them –

particularly in a home which was financially secure enough to possess what Margaret recalled were “slick chestnut horses and a shiny carriage.”¹⁴⁰ As a slave, Ben was not free to live with them; in fact, we know that he was hired out for a period of time to Dr. Anthony Thompson.¹⁴¹ Who, then, are Margaret’s parents? Why, given all the family members then living in Tubman’s home in Fleming, including her brother John, her sister-in-law Catherine and her children, possibly her brother James, and her parents, did she take this particular child and leave her with one of the most powerful and richest white families in Auburn? What made this particular child so much more important than the others?

There is one possibility that must be considered, regardless of how remote it may seem; that Margaret Stewart is in fact Harriet Tubman’s own daughter. Such a scenario provides one of the few, if not the only logical explanation for Tubman “kidnapping” Margaret from her home. Tubman understood the particular pain of separation of family; she never forgot the “hopeless grief” of her parents when her sisters were sold away.¹⁴² Does it make sense that she would have stolen a child from its mother? Tubman’s primary goal during the 1850s was family reunification; it was for family that she risked her life over and over again to return to the Eastern Shore to bring them north. Was she also returning time and time again to see the young child she had given birth to?

The likelihood that Tubman had a child, and that the child remained secreted, seems remote those not impossible. It is possible that Tubman gave birth before she left the Eastern Shore. Knowing that her child would be enslaved, Tubman could have given the child to another woman, a free woman, to raise for her – a woman who may have given birth at the same time, who could, in fact, claim she had twins. Tubman could have

concealed her pregnancy, or she could have claimed the child had died. Though Margaret's daughter Alice had been told her mother was born on the Eastern Shore, her death certificate states she was born in Baltimore. After running away, Tubman could have given birth there, leaving the child with a free black family while she pursued her efforts to liberate her family.¹⁴³ In fact, Tubman was in Baltimore in December 1850, when she helped her niece Kessiah Bowley escape from the Eastern Shore with her husband John Bowley and children Araminta and James. Baltimore's waterfront was home to several of Tubman's extended family members and friends, who helped her on several occasions when she used Baltimore as an escape route out of the Eastern Shore. Irrespective of where Margaret may have been born, the high number of free black families in Maryland made such a plan a possibility.

While this scenario is highly speculative, it would help to answer several lingering questions about Margaret and her strong bond with Tubman, a bond that was obvious to those who knew them. Alice Brickler also told Conrad another important point, a comment that seemingly made Conrad think seriously about who Margaret was and what exactly was the nature of her relationship to Tubman. "Strange to say," Brickler wrote Conrad, "mother looked very much like Aunt Harriet, and there was a hardness about her character in the face of adversity that must have been hereditary."¹⁴⁴ Conrad inquired of Florence Carter if this was true, and Carter confirmed it.¹⁴⁵ When Margaret died in 1930, the newspaper described her as Tubman's "foster daughter."¹⁴⁶

Why, once safely in the north, would Tubman conceal the identity of her own child? There are several plausible reasons. The child may not have been John Tubman's, or once she ran away from slavery (and him) he may have shown no interest in the child, if

he had been aware of its existence in the first place. John abandoned his marriage to Tubman as early as 1851, and she may have felt that leaving Margaret with an intact free family was better than trying to care for the child herself in Philadelphia, particularly if she remained at risk of recapture. In 1862, Tubman may have doubted that her middle-class white supporters would view her so favorably if she revealed the presence of an unknown daughter. Complex notions of slave women's sexuality throughout the antebellum period (and after) remained a titillating yet uncomfortable topic of fascination for whites, north and south. Anti-slavery texts, whether in newspapers, tracts, novels or slave narratives spoke to the particular problems black women faced in slavery – sexual exploitation by white masters denigrated black women and men, and contributed to a view that black sexual activity was aberrant, immoral and uncontrollable. Illegitimate children and unfaithful husbands all fed into the racist stereotype of low moral character in black women and men. Tubman spent enough time with white northerners to know that many of them shared these stereotypical views. Therefore, she may not have wanted to confront this issue, nor burden her self or her daughter with such disapproval. Once the lie had been told, it may have been easier to continue to maintain it. When Tubman settled Margaret with Lazette Worden in the Seward household in 1862, she had chosen not to care for Margaret herself; her commitment to going to South Carolina to help with the war effort superceded any thoughts of staying in Auburn with her family. Why risk being judged for abandoning her child again?

Brickler could not reconcile her mother's position within the various kin relationships in Tubman's household. She was confused, and rightly so, as it seems that no one made mention of who Margaret's parents were; nor is there any mention of

whether Margaret returned to the Eastern Shore at any time after the Civil War to see the family she was allegedly taken from.¹⁴⁷ It appears, as well, that Margaret's favored position in Tubman's household provoked serious jealousy and resentment from others. Margaret was "very proud to the point of being snobbish... she was short and plump, light brown with long thick Negroid hair," Brickler told Conrad. Margaret had been favored with a good education, a lovely and wealthy home environment, and all the accoutrements that came with being part of the Seward and Worden households. A Tubman relative, Brickler recalled, "disliked Mother very much [and] whenever Aunt Harriet was out of hearing she used to call Mother a 'pumpkin-colored hussey.'"¹⁴⁸ Much to the chagrin of some extended Tubman family members, Alice Lucas (Brickler) was chosen to unveil a bronze memorial tablet placed on the county court house in Auburn in Tubman's honor in 1914, an honor bestowed upon a close relative.¹⁴⁹

Animosity toward Margaret spanned generations. In 1940, Eva Stewart Northrup, a great niece who had been raised since birth in the early 1890s by Tubman, wrote to Earl Conrad to inform him "Mrs. Brickler is of no relation, neither by blood or through marriage, whatsoever, to my Aunt. I have already put her down in history as an imposture. She has no rightful claim to give out information or to claim credit for an[y] information that she might give... She, Mrs. Brickler, is no relative of Harriet Tubman."¹⁵⁰ Northrup asked Conrad to share the information Brickler had given him; in addition to all the other material he had collected while researching his book. "There are only a few sources that are authentic. But there are plenty of the other type... I would also like to know what arrangements you intend to make [w]ith me for the information I could give you for the book? Also, what percentage of the royalty [sp] from the sale of

your book?” Making sure that Conrad received her message clearly, she wrote again, in closing, “Mrs. Brickler is in no way shape or manner a Kin of Harriet Tubman. Neither she nor her parents... Since she is not rightfully a Kin she is eliminated from sharing any honors.”¹⁵¹

Conrad confronted Brickler about Northrup’s accusations: “Mrs. Northrup of Philadelphia has written to say that you are not in any way related to Harriet.”¹⁵² At first, Brickler claimed she did not know who Northrup was.¹⁵³ Brickler attempted to defend herself; she told Conrad “there is a part of the family history that is better never told;” with such a large family as Tubman’s there were naturally many different perspectives and stories to tell, prompting some relatives to “think of themselves as the sole heirs.”¹⁵⁴ In a later letter, Brickler realized that she did in fact know Northrup. “I remember Katy Stewart Northrup. I did not know she is living in Philadelphia. This may sound catty – but – I’m not surprised at anything she says or writes.”¹⁵⁵ Brickler summed up the situation quite effectively: “Being a member of the Harriet Tubman family is an empty honor at most but I do have this to say. Mother was always said by the older heads to be Aunt Harriet’s niece.”¹⁵⁶ Whether Margaret was Tubman’s daughter, the daughter of an unknown brother, or someone else’s child, her presence and importance to Tubman remains a mystery. Irrespective of the kin relationship, the story of Margaret’s “kidnapping” remains one of the most puzzling, and troubling, stories of Tubman’s life.

CHAPTER NINE NOTES

¹ "Letter, Beriah Green to Samuel Campbell, March 19, 1860." Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Collection. 1:22. William Clements Library, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor, MI.

² "Letter, Beriah Green to Samuel Campbell, March 19, 1860." For an excellent biography of Green, see Milton Sernett, Abolition's Axe: Beriah Green, Oneida Institute and the Black Freedom Struggle. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

³ "Letter, Beriah Green to Samuel Campbell, March 19, 1860."

⁴ Give brief reminder of Jerry Rescue.

⁵ "Letter, Beriah Green to Samuel Campbell, March 19, 1860."

⁶ Tubman may also have been hiding briefly. Two weeks earlier, Franklin Sanborn had been arrested in Concord, Massachusetts for his refusal to testify before the Mason Commission investigating the John Brown raid, in Washington D.C. Though he was released and charges were eventually dropped, his arrest was upsetting to those who were intimate with Brown's plans. See, Franklin B. Sanborn, Recollections of Seventy Years. (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1909). 208-217.

⁷ Special thanks to Scott Christianson for information on Nalle and his rescue. Christianson is now working on a biography of Nalle. Additional published sources on the Charles Nalle rescue include: Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 88-103. Bradford includes in her narrative of this rescue a copy of an article from the *Troy Whig*, April 28, 1859 in addition to a statement sent to her about the rescue from Martin Townsend, who was, at the time, Nalle's attorney. Bradford also, it appears, quoted Tubman's recollections of the event. The *Troy Whig* article was also reprinted in *The Liberator*, May 4, 1860. See also, "A "Jerry Rescue" in Troy," *Troy Daily Times*, Troy, N.Y., April 27, 1859. This article, written within hours of the event, is very detailed and mentions the participation of a "venerable old colored woman," though they do not name Tubman; and A. J. Weise, History of the City of Troy. (Troy, N.Y.: William H. Young, 1876). 176-178. For an anecdotal remembrance of Tubman's storytelling of this event, see Samuel Hopkins Adams, Grandfather Stories. (New York: Random House, 1947). 275-277.

⁸ "Nalle Rescue."

⁹ Bureau of the Census. United States Federal Census, 1860. Troy, New York.

¹⁰ Bradford, Scenes. 88.

¹¹ "Nalle Rescue."

¹² Tubman is credited with yelling "fire" herself, or getting others to do it. "Harriet, now seeing the necessity for a tremendous effort for his rescue, sent out some little boys to cry *fire*. The bells rang, the crowd increased, till the whole street was a dense mass of people." See Bradford, Scenes. 89.

¹³ For a humorous account of this, see Adams, Grandfather Stories. 276.

¹⁴ Bradford, Scenes. 90. Bradford also suggests that Nalle was his master's brother. According to Nalle's lawyer, Martin Townsend, "Nalle is an octoroon," that is, he was what was considered at the time to be one-eighth black and seven-eighths white. See, Bradford, Scenes. 100. The US Census records and New York census records categorize Nalle as a mulatto. The *Troy Whig* reported that Nalle was "about thirty years of age, tall, quite light-complexioned, and good-looking." See *April 28 Troy Whig, 1860*, "Fugitive Slave Rescue in Troy. Running Fight with the Officers - Recapture and Rescue," as reprinted in *The Liberator*, Boston, May 4, 1860.

¹⁵ The anti-slavery press of the time made much of very light skinned or seemingly "white" slaves, highlighting what William Wells Brown argued was "the best evidence of the degraded and immoral condition of the relation of master and slave in the United States." See William Wells Brown, Clotel; or, the President's Daughter, a Narrative of Slave Life in the United States. (Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer Company, Publishers, Inc., rpt. edition, 1988). 55. For further readings on color consciousness, especially in the context of nineteenth century literature, see, John Ernest, Resistance and Reformation in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1995).; Carla L. Peterson, "Doers of the Word": African American Women Speakers and Writers in the North, 1830-1880. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Jean Fagan Yellin, The Intricate Knot: Black Figures in American Literature, 1776-1863. (New York: New York University Press, 1972). ; Jean Fagan Yellin, Women and Sisters: The Anti-Slavery Feminist in American Culture. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989); and Eric J. Sundquist, To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994).

¹⁶ "Nalle Rescue." See also, Bradford, Scenes. 90-91.

¹⁷ "Nalle Rescue."

¹⁸ "Nalle Rescue."

¹⁹ "Nalle Rescue." Bradford wrote that Tubman's clothes were torn from her; Tubman's bonnet had been given to Nalle to disguise him.

²⁰ Bradford, Scenes. 90

²¹ Bradford, Scenes. 89.

²² Bradford, Scenes. 89. See also "Nalle Rescue."

²³ "Nalle Rescue."

²⁴ Bradford, Scenes. 99; and "Nalle Rescue."

²⁵ Bradford, Scenes. 102.

²⁶ Adams, Grandfather Stories. 276. "I th'ow um acrost my shouldah like a bag o' meal and tote um away outen theyah."

²⁷ "Nalle Rescue." Bradford modifies this story by stating that "A gentleman who was riding by with a fine horse, stopped to ask what the disturbance meant; and on hearing the story, his sympathies seemed to be thoroughly aroused; he sprang from his wagon, calling out, 'That is a blood-horse, drive him till he drops.'" See Bradford, Scenes. 91. Tubman, on the other hand, intimated to her audiences that she stole the horse from a passerby who "was a good judge of hawssflesh." See Adams, Grandfather Stories. 176.

²⁸ Bradford, Scenes. Bradford says he was in Schenectedy. 91, 100. See also "Nalle Rescue."

²⁹ Bradford, Scenes. 103.

³⁰ Executive Committee, The Anti-Slavery History of the John Brown Year; Being the Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the American Anti-Slavery Society Boston: Prentiss and Deland ed. (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1861). 61-62.

³¹ Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney, "Moses," *Freedmen's Record*, March 1865.

³² Bradford, Scenes. 103.

³³ John Wheeler Clarkson, "An Annotated Checklist of the Letters of Franklin Benjamin Sanborn" (Columbia University, 1971). Letter, Sanborn to Lyman, June 10-11, 1860. [held at Historical Society of Pennsylvania.]

³⁴ "Woman's Rights Convention," *The Liberator*, Boston, July 6, 1860.

³⁵ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage, ed., The History of Woman Suffrage, Vol 1, 1848-1861, 2nd ed. (Rochester, N.Y.: Charles Mann, 1887). 276-277.

³⁶ John Bell Robinson, Pictures of Slavery and Anti-Slavery. (Philadelphia, 1863). 322-323. Robinson wrote this in 1860, but he published this in 1863.

³⁷ Robinson, Pictures. 323.

³⁸ Robinson, Pictures. 324.

³⁹ See American National Biography, "William H. Seward."

⁴⁰ "Microfilm Reels 192-193." Seward Papers. Harvard University. Cambridge.. See also, Rebecca Green. "History of Harriet Tubman and Her Brick House," Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: 1998. On January 7, 1860, after Tubman had paid \$170.89 to Seward, her debt had been reduced to \$876.95; by the following December, after making no payments, Tubman owed Seward \$968.46.

⁴¹ "Letter, Harriet Tubman to Wendell Phillips, August 4, 1860." Wendell Phillips Papers. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge. The identity of the person who wrote this letter for Tubman is unknown.

⁴² "Tubman to Phillips, Aug. 4, 1860." Walcutt was also the person who sent Seward the first draft of \$200 that Tubman paid on her mortgage in July, 1859. See "Papers." ; and Green. "Tubman Home," ; also, for a brief mention of Walcutt, see Henry Meyer, All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). 533, 627.

⁴³ "Tubman to Phillips, Aug. 4, 1860."

⁴⁴ William Still reports Stephen's name as "Ennets," though this is most certainly Ennals, a common Dorchester County name. There are no "Ennets" in Dorchester County. William Still, The Underground Railroad. (1871; Reprint, Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1970). 554.

⁴⁵ Still, Underground Railroad. 554-555.

⁴⁶ Still, Underground Railroad. 554-555.

⁴⁷ According to the Dorchester County Assessment Records, Rachel was taken off the Brodess taxable property list in 1859. Only the two children, Angerine and Benjamin remained. A local Auburn abolitionist, D.C. Collins, wrote to Franklin Sanborn on January 25, 1861, "We are much pleased that Harriet succeeded in assisting even a few of her suffering friends to escape from bondage, but her sister was not among the number, she having been released from her labors some time since by that friend of the poor slave, the Angel of Death." See "Letter, D.C. Collins to Franklin Sanborn, January 25, 1861." Franklin B. Sanborn Papers. American Antiquarian Society. Worcester, MA.. See also,

"Letter, Gerrit Smith to Franklin Sanborn, January 29, 1861." Franklin B. Sanborn Papers. Library of Congress. Washington, D.C. Smith wrote that Tubman "returned Christmas from another of her southern expeditions, bringing with her 7 slaves. But her sister, after whom she went was not among them. She died a little before Harriet reached her neighborhood."

⁴⁸ Cheney, "Moses."

⁴⁹ James Freeman Clark, Anti-Slavery Days New York; J. W. Lovell Company, 1883 ed. (Westport, Connecticut: rpt., Negro Universities Press, 1970). Tubman apparently told Clark that "there were many people in the slave states, even slaveholders, who were willing to secret fugitives if paid enough for doing it." 81.

⁵⁰ Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Sons, 1886). 91. This story does not appear in Bradford's first biography of Tubman, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. In her attempts to make the second biography a little more fresh, Bradford added new details not mentioned in the first. Bradford knew Tubman and spent enough time with her to support the conjecture that these additional stories and details came from Tubman herself. Bradford's degree of understanding of the details and the stories, characters and time frames, however, remains an unresolved issue.

⁵¹ See "Dorchester County Levy Book." Dorchester County Board of Commissioners. MDSA. Annapolis, MD. np.

⁵² See "Levy Book." np.

⁵³ Still, Underground Railroad. (Still wrote that Tubman "engaged to pilot them within reach of Wilmington, at least to Thomas Garret's." 555. Tubman usually traveled to Philadelphia and New York.

⁵⁴ Still, Underground Railroad. 555. See also, "Assessment Record." Dorchester County Board of County Commissioners. C687. MdHR 18,631, MDSA. Cambridge, MD. See District 4, for the various Cator families; and see also, Will of Thomas E. Cator, Leslie and Neil Keddie, Dorchester County, Maryland Wills Liber T.H.H. I: September 1854-February 1857, Folios 340-448. (Salisbury, MD: Family Tree Bookshops, 2002). 26

⁵⁵ Still, Underground Railroad. 555. See also, Elaine McGill, transcriber, Robert Bell's Book of Slave Statistics 1864-1868. (Privately Printed, 2001).

⁵⁶ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 53-55.

⁵⁷ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 54-55.

⁵⁸ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 55. Bradford says here that there were two babies, twins, whom she had "since seen well grown young women." It is unclear if the Ennals had one

or two babies – Bradford often conflated stories, so we may never know exactly which trip this was. Given the timing, however, and that Tubman did not make additional trips after the fall of 1857 to the Eastern Shore (until the fall of 1860,) it is likely she was out of touch with all the ramifications of heightened security on the Eastern Shore when she did return at the end of 1860.

⁵⁹ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 56.

⁶⁰ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 57.

⁶¹ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 57.

⁶² "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, December 30, 1860." Garrison Family Papers. Box 36. f. 948, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁶³ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 35.

⁶⁴ "Letter, Martha Wright to Ellen Garrison, Dec. 30, 1860." I have made some editorial adjustments to this letter for easier reading: "...went out foraging, and sometimes cd. not get back till dark, fearing she wd. be followed - Then if they had crept further in, & she couldn't find them, she wd. whistle, or sing certain hymns & they wd answer."

⁶⁵ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 36-37. See also, Bradford, Scenes. 26.

⁶⁶ Bradford, Scenes. 27.

⁶⁷ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 37-38.

⁶⁸ Still, Underground Railroad. 554-555. See also, James McGowan, Station Master on the Underground Railroad. (Moylan, PA: The Whimsie Press, 1977). 107-108.

⁶⁹ Still, Underground Railroad. 555.

⁷⁰ Still, Underground Railroad. 555. McGowan, Station Master. 108.

⁷¹ William Still, The Underground Railroad. (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., rpt. edition 1970). 555.

⁷² Still, Underground Railroad. 555.

⁷³ "Letter, Martha Wright to Ellen Garrison, Dec. 30, 1860."

⁷⁴ "Letter, Collins to Sanborn, Jan. 25, 1861."

⁷⁵ "Letter, Collins to Sanborn, Jan. 25, 1861."

⁷⁶ "Smith to Sanborn, January 29, 1861."

⁷⁷ "Smith to Sanborn, January 29, 1861."

⁷⁸ James B. Clark, "An Hour with Harriet Tubman," in Christophe: A Tragedy in Prose of Imperial Haiti, ed. William Edgar Easton (Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Company, 1911). The Gerrit home was quite large and impressive, much like a southern plantation. John Stauffer describes in his work on Black abolitionists that Smith's home reminded Frederick Douglass of the great plantation of Edward Lloyd, of Talbot County, whose estate was one of the largest in Maryland. The Smith estate featured an impressive mansion, with many out buildings and barns, and it also employed many African Americans, "artisans and servants along with field hands and farmhands," who had settled near the property over the many years the Smiths had lived there and provided land for black families. See John Stauffer, The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002). 82-83.

⁷⁹ Clark, "Hour with Harriet Tubman."

⁸⁰ Clark, "Hour with Harriet Tubman."

⁸¹ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Lucretia Coffin Mott, Nd. (Early February 1861)." Garrison Family Papers. Box 37. f. 950, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁸² "New York." The Underground Railroad: Manuscript materials collected by Professor Siebert. US 5278.36.25. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. Wixom manuscript, especially pp. 31-34.

⁸³ "Letter, David Wright to Martha Coffin Wright, February 9, 1861." Garrison Family Papers. Box 42. F. 1043, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁸⁴ Wright's decision to send it to Hosmer may also indicated the intention to have the warning published in the newspapers to warn fugitives and anti-slavery activists in the area of the potential threat. See "Letter, M.C. Wright to L.C. Mott, Feb. 1861."

⁸⁵ "Letter, M.C. Wright to L.C. Mott, Feb. 1861."

⁸⁶ For more information on William Seward see, Glyndon G. Van Deusen, William Henry Seward. (1967). See also, American National Biography. For more information on the sectional crisis of 1861, see James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988).

⁸⁷ Franklin Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, July 17, 1863. See also, Bradford, Scenes. 84.

⁸⁸ "Letter, Gerrit Smith to Franklin Sanborn, February 20, 1861." Franklin Sanborn Papers. Library of Congress. Washington, D.C. See also, "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Lucretia Coffin Mott, Fragment - February 1861." Garrison Family Papers. Box 37. f. 950, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁸⁹ "Letter, M.C. Wright to L. C. Mott, Fragment Feb. 1861."

⁹⁰ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." Smith returned to his home in Peterboro on February 20, leaving Tubman behind in Canada. "Smith to Sanborn, Feb. 20, 1861."

⁹¹ "Letter, Gerrit Smith to Franklin Sanborn, April 16, 1861." Franklin Sanborn Papers. Library of Congress. Washington, D.C.

⁹² Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: J.J. Little & Co., 1901). 145.

⁹³ "Elijah R. Stewart, Citizenship Papers, October 23, 1888." United States Circuit Court, Boston. Boston.. The papers indicate that Elijah came to New York in April, 1861. It is not known whether James Stewart accompanied them or not. It is assumed he did so, though he must have died before 1865 (see State of New York. New York State Census, 1865. Cayuga County), after fathering two more children with Catherine; Adam, born ca. Aug-Sept. 1861, and Hester, born ca. Sept. 1863. Adam died on February 1, 1863. See Records of Central Presbyterian Church, Auburn, N.Y. See also 1865 NY Census, Cayuga County. There is no record of James's death, although Catherine is listed as single in the 1865 census, and the widow of Andrew Winslow in the 1870 city directory. See Hitchcock & Smith, Auburn Directory for 1870. (Auburn and Syracuse, NY: Hitchcock & Smith Printers, 1870). P. 191. See also Bureau of the Census. United States Federal Census, 1870. Cayuga County, N.Y.

⁹⁴ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. 143.

⁹⁵ See Auburn Daily Advertiser, Auburn Daily Advertiser City Directory for 1862-63. (Auburn, N.Y.: Knapp & Peck, 1862). P. 183; Andrew Boyd, Boyd's Auburn Directory, 1867-68. (Auburn, N.Y.: Andrew Boyd Publisher, 1867). 215.

⁹⁶ "Letter, Gerrit Smith to Franklin Sanborn, April 11, 1861." Franklin Sanborn Papers. Library of Congress. Washington, D.C. Gerrit wrote, "I do not know where Harriet is. Her mother visited us a few weeks ago."

⁹⁷ See "Relief of Fugitives in Canada," *The Liberator*, Boston, October 25, 1861., and "Relief of Fugitives in Canada. An Association," *The Liberator*, Boston, December 20, 1861.

⁹⁸ Wilkins name was "Wilkinson," according to William Still. See Still, Underground Railroad. 453-467. The Ontario Census, 1861, also lists him as Horatio Wilkinson, living in Grantham not far from William Henry Stewart, Tubman's brother. Wilkinson had been claimed by Thomas Hodson, of Dorchester County. The other men were Plymouth Cannon, who ran from Horsey's Crossroads in Sussex County Delaware, Lemuel Mitchell, Josiah Mitchell, George Henry Ballard, and John Mitchell. Plymouth Cannon later settled in Auburn. George Ballard was related to Levin Parker, who had fled Dorchester County in October, 1857. See Still, Underground Railroad. 466-467. Fletcher lived near Kit Anthony, and Anthony's fellow runaway Joe Viney, in St. Paul's Ward in St. Catharines. See 1861 Canadian Census, St. Catharines, Ontario.

⁹⁹ "Relief, Oct. 25, 1861.", and "Relief, Dec. 1861."

¹⁰⁰ "Relief, Dec. 1861."

¹⁰¹ Still, Underground Railroad. 465.

¹⁰² "Letter, Franklin Sanborn to Gerrit Smith, September 8, 1861." Gerrit Smith Papers. Syracuse University Library. Syracuse, N.Y.

¹⁰³ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 92-93.

¹⁰⁴ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 93.

¹⁰⁵ McPherson, Battle Cry. 264-275.

¹⁰⁶ McPherson, Battle Cry. 284-288. See also, Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). 92-100.

¹⁰⁷ War Department. Records and Pension Office United States, War Records Office., The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Series 1, Vol. 2. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880). 593-595.

¹⁰⁸ Letter, J.H. Bayne to General McClellan, March 12, 1862, citing a letter from F.A. Medley, January 21, 1862. "Records of Asst. Commissioner for the State of S.C. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870" p. 1

¹⁰⁹ Kenneth Walter Cameron, ed., Young Reporter of Concord: A Checklist of F.B. Sanborn's Letters to Benjamin Smith Lyman, 1853-1867, with Extracts Emphasizing Life and Literary Events in the World of Emerson, Thoreau and Alcott (Hartford, CT: Transcendental Books, 1978). 33. Letter, Sanborn to Lyman, November 3, 1861. See also, Fields, Slavery. 106-107, 110-113.

¹¹⁰ War Department. Records and Pension Office United States, War Records Office., The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Series 3, Vol. 1. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1899). 480-482. In September 1861, Thomas R. Stewart, brother of James A. Stewart, was arrested on suspicion of carrying supplies to rebels in Virginia. See Naval War Records Department. Office of Naval Records and Library United States, The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion. Series 1, Vol. 4. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896). 650-652.

¹¹¹ McPherson, Battle Cry. 370-371.

¹¹² McPherson, Battle Cry. 354-355, and 494-500.

¹¹³ McPherson, Battle Cry. 496-500.

¹¹⁴ McPherson, Battle Cry. 354-355. See also, Ira Berlin, et al., ed., Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation 1861-1867, vol. Series I, Vol. 1, The Destruction of Slavery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). 70-75.

¹¹⁵ Berlin, ed., Destruction of Slavery. P. 22-23; see also McPherson, Battle Cry. 497-498.

¹¹⁶ Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment rpt. 1964 ed. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1999). 144-152. McPherson, Battle Cry. 499. See also, Thomas O'Connor, Civil War Boston: Home Front and Battlefield. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997). 111.

¹¹⁷ McPherson, Battle Cry. 499; James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964). 102-103; Rose, Rehearsal. 144-153.

¹¹⁸ Noah Andre Trudeau, Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War, 1862-1865. (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1998). 12.

¹¹⁹ War Department. Records and Pension Office United States, War Records Office., The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Series 1, Vol. 6. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1882). 218.

¹²⁰ For an excellent study of this period of occupation of the Sea Islands and Port Royal, and efforts to educate, feed, and clothe newly liberated slaves, and rebuild the area's farming operations, see Rose, Rehearsal.

¹²¹ See Rose, Rehearsal. 35-44, also, O'Connor, Boston. 110-115; McPherson, Struggle. 158-164.; and Luther P. Jackson, "The Educational Efforts of the Freedmen's

Bureau and Freedmen's Aid Societies in South Carolina, 1862-1872," *Journal of Negro History* Vol. 8, no. 1 January 1923, (1923): Bostonians established the Boston Educational Commission, which soon became the New England Freedmen's Aid Society; New Yorkers established the New York National Freedmen's Relief Association; and Philadelphians created the Port Royal Relief Committee, later known as the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association. Jackson, "Freedmen's Aid." 6.

¹²² Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." See also Bradford, *Scenes*. 85. Ednah Dow Cheney wrote that once the "war broke out, Harriet was very anxious to go to South Carolina to assist the contrabands." Cheney, "Moses." 37-38.

¹²³ "Interview with Helen W. Tatlock [Mrs. William Tatlock]." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York.. Tatlock said: "During the war she had been opposed to some of the things Lincoln did; she had been prejudiced against him at first." See also, Rosa Belle Holt, "A Heroine in Ebony," *The Chautauquan*, July 1896. 462.

¹²⁴ "Harriet Tubman," *The Liberator*, Boston, February 21, 1862.

¹²⁵ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." ; Bradford, *Scenes*. (; "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'." Franklin B. Sanborn Papers. Box 1, Folder 5. Box 1, Folder 5, American Antiquarian Society. Worcester, MA.. ; and Bradford, *Scenes*. 6, 55, 85.

¹²⁶ Cheney, "Moses." 38.

¹²⁷ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Francis Wright, May 28, 1862." Garrison Family Papers. Box 41. folder 1028.22, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, Massachusetts.

¹²⁸ Personal communication with Peter Wisby, Curator, William H. Seward House, Auburn, N.Y.

¹²⁹ See Pam Greene, "Seward: Innkeeper on the Underground Railroad," *The Syracuse Newspapers: Cayuga Neighbors - Herald Journal*, Syracuse, N.Y., February 17, 2000.

¹³⁰ "Letter, Alice Lucas Brickler to Earl Conrad, July 19, 1939." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York.. For Carter's comments, see Earl Conrad, *General Harriet Tubman* 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1990). 230, fn. 13. "Mrs. Florence Carter, a close friend of Harriet Tubman in the closing period of Harriet's life, in a statement to the author, has verified the fact that the "kidnapped" child remained throughout life a favorite of Harriet Tubman." Margaret Stewart married Henry Lucas in 1872 at the Central Presbyterian Church in Auburn.

¹³¹ "Letter, Alice Lucas Brickler to Earl Conrad, August 14, 1939." Earl Conrad/ Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York.

¹³² "Brickler to Conrad, Aug. 14, 1939."

¹³³ "Brickler to Conrad, Aug. 14, 1939."

¹³⁴ "Brickler to Conrad, Aug. 14, 1939."

¹³⁵ "Brickler to Conrad, Aug. 14, 1939."

¹³⁶ Frances Seward died in June 1865, and Seward's daughter Fanny died in 1866. See American National Biography. Lazette Worden remained a fixture in the Seward home, helping to oversee the domestic operations of the household. Margaret probably lived with Lazette in the Seward home and possibly at Worden's own home on Owasco Lake in Auburn. Margaret is also listed in the 1865 Fleming, New York Census in the Tubman household. According to Brickler, Margaret was often taken to Tubman's home for visits, and she may have been visiting, or even staying there momentarily when the census takers came by the house. The census was taken during the same period in which Francis Seward was dying, and William H. Seward and his son Frederick were still recovering from a near fatal attack they endured on the night of Lincoln's assassination, at the hands of Lewis Powell, one of John Wilkes Booth's co-conspirators. Margaret may have been sent to Tubman's home while the Seward house was in such turmoil.

¹³⁷ "Brickler to Conrad, Aug. 14, 1939."

¹³⁸ Dorchester County Court, Chattel Records. (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives. "John D. Parker from David Ross," and "John D. Parker from David Ross," May 25, 1857, p. 275. John D. Parker, it will be recalled, was Anthony Thompson's overseer, who also purchased several hundred acres of Thompson property in the Peter's Neck area. He was quite familiar with the Ross family. David and Benjamin's mother remains unidentified. The court record does not give her name.

¹³⁹ Though the 1865 Fleming, NY census indicates Margaret to be 13, all subsequent records indicate she was born around 1850. See 1880, 1892 (NY), 1905 (NY), 1920, and 1930 censuses.

¹⁴⁰ "Brickler to Conrad, Aug. 14, 1939."

¹⁴¹ "Deposition." Chancery Papers 249. Dorchester County Court, Dorchester County Court House. Cambridge, MD.

¹⁴² Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 15.

¹⁴³ Vital Records, "Foster Child of Harriet Tubman Dies," *Advertiser-Journal and Auburn Citizen*, Auburn, N.Y., May 19, 1930.

¹⁴⁴ "Brickler to Conrad, Aug. 14, 1939."

¹⁴⁵ Conrad, General Tubman. 230, fn. 13, "Mrs. Carter verifies that this woman bore a marked resemblance to Harriet."

¹⁴⁶ Unidentified newspaper article, Harriet Tubman Scrapbooks, Seymour Library, Auburn, NY.

¹⁴⁷ In one letter to Conrad, Brickler says that her mother was the sister of Maria Elliot, and that Maria's daughter Mary Gaston [Gaskin] called Margaret "Aunt Maggie (much to my father's disgust)." What Brickler meant by her father being disgusted is unknown, although it may have meant he felt the relationship was not as Brickler imagined. There was so much tension in the family regarding Margaret that the resulting motivations and attitudes have forever, perhaps, clouded any hope at finding the true relationships.

¹⁴⁸ "Letter, Alice Lucas Brickler to Earl Conrad." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: The New York Public Library. New York.

¹⁴⁹ "To a Most Heroic Negress: Fitting Memorial of Harriet Tubman Davis is Appropriately Displayed," *The Auburn Citizen*, Auburn, N.Y., June 14, 1914.

¹⁵⁰ "Letter, Mrs. E. S. Northrup to Earl Conrad." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: The New York Public Library. New York.. Eva was also known as Katy. According to her daughter, Mariline Northrup Wilkins, her name at birth was Katherine Evelyn Helena Harriet Stewart.

¹⁵¹ "Northrup to Conrad, April 1, 1940."

¹⁵² "Letter, Earl Conrad to Alice Lucas Brickler." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: The New York Public Library. New York.

¹⁵³ "Brickler to Conrad, April 23, 1940."

¹⁵⁴ "Brickler to Conrad, April 23, 1940."

¹⁵⁵ "Letter, Alice Lucas Brickler to Earl Conrad, November 26, 1940." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: The New York Public Library. New York.

¹⁵⁶ "Brickler to Conrad, April 23, 1940."

CHAPTER X

IT WAS RAINING BLOOD: HARRIET TUBMAN'S CIVIL WAR

Harriet Tubman's Civil War started years before the first shots were fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina in April 1861. Some might argue that her first defiant act as a slave, that of running away at the age of six to avoid a whipping when she was caught taking a lump of sugar, was the beginning of her personal Civil War. But it was Tubman's battles to claim liberty for scores of friends and relatives that marked the beginning of a strategic, political and even military consciousness that eventually prepared her for a role on the battlefields. Her leadership skills, honed on the escape missions she successfully conducted from the Eastern Shore, and the support systems and close community relationships she forged in the Northern U.S. and Canada, earned her the title, "Moses of her people." Like the biblical Moses who led the Jews out of Egypt, Tubman sprung forward from an unlikely background - uneducated, female and black - emerging as a leader among men.

These leadership skills, combined with a passion and commitment to fight for freedom, brought Tubman to the attention of Massachusetts Governor John Andrews. In January 1862, Andrews made arrangements for Tubman to travel to South Carolina, where he believed she would be useful in the Union war effort. Given her ability to move

in and out of hostile territory undetected, and he probably assumed that as a natural leader of fleeing slaves she would be helpful in dealing with the hundreds of “contrabands” flooding Union camps at Port Royal. Andrew and Tubman conceived of the idea that “she would be a valuable person to operate within the enemies lines in procuring information & scouts,” as well.¹

Harriet later recalled that someone “changed the program” before she started for Beaufort, and instead redirected her to participate in the distribution of clothing and supplies being sent by the various charitable organizations forming in the North, as the numbers of slaves coming to Union lines continued unabated.² She was sent to New York, and from there, Col. Francis Howe sent her along to Beaufort on the “Government transport Atlantic,” although years later she told Emma Telford a slightly different sequence of events which brought her to Beaufort.³ “They wouldn’t let no colored people go down South then,” she told Telford,

unless they went with some of the officers as a servant; so they got a gentleman from New York to take me as a servant. He was stopping at a big hotel on Broadway and I went to the parlor and they sent for him and he came down: but I didn’t like that man no how. He looked at me and said, ‘well, I guess you’re young enough. You go to the quarter master and tell him I sent you.’ But I made up my mind that I wasn’t going with that man. He looked brave and noble enough to be a gentleman if looks made one, a struttin’ about; but I went out and I ain’t seen the quarter master yet, nor him neither. So I just went on alone to Baltimore, and General Hunter sent for me to go to Beaufort, an the vessel that was going there didn’t sail for two days, a waitin’ for me till the General’s orders were fulfilled.⁴

The needs were so great at the time of her arrival (sometime in the spring, probably early May) that she immediately set about doing anything and everything she could.⁵

Much of the early Union military, government and philanthropic efforts in Port Royal targeted the dismantling of the plantation slave labor system by replacing it with a wage-

based system, a difficult task given the hundreds of years of forced labor that had denied education and economic opportunity to thousands of Sea Island slaves. This early effort was called the “Port Royal Experiment,” a “proving ground for the freedmen,” which would, they hoped, demonstrate how well former slaves could cope and function in a free, capitalist economy, given the right guidance and education by Northern abolitionists.⁶

Tubman would be part of this experiment, and she was one of the very first northern blacks who traveled to South Carolina to participate in this grand effort. “I first took charge of the Christian Commission house at Beaufort,”⁷ she explained, which had been set up by the YMCA to distribute supplies of clothing, food, books, and other items, and to provide “physical as well as spiritual nurture to Union soldiers.”⁸ Tubman established a “wash house” with \$200 she received from the government; here she taught newly freed women to do washing, sewing, and baking for the Union soldiers, so they could support themselves with wages instead of depending upon government support.⁹ At first, Tubman had been allowed to “draw rations” as a soldier, but later “relinquished” the right because of the tension it created among the freedmen who perceived her as receiving preferential treatment.¹⁰ She purchased supplies in Beaufort and at Hilton Head, which she either re-sold or used to bake pies and make root beer, which she sold to the soldiers who were eager to supplement their meager rations, thus supporting herself and putting away a little money to send to her parents.¹¹

At some time during the spring and summer, Tubman was introduced to General David Hunter through a friend of Sanborn’s, Elbridge Gerry Dudley.¹² She was attracted to Hunter’s strong abolitionist and reform ideology; within weeks of his appointment to

the Department of the South he declared that all “contrabands” in the Port Royal district were free. Shortly thereafter, he declared all slaves within the jurisdiction of the Department of the South, which included South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, free people.¹³

Hunter was intent on building a regiment of black soldiers, the First South Carolina Volunteers, made up of newly liberated slaves in the Port Royal District, and he set about recruiting at the various plantations in and around Hilton Head and the other Sea Islands.¹⁴ Northern abolitionists loudly praised Hunter’s independent actions, but Lincoln was not ready for emancipation, nor was he ready to outfit a regiment of black troops. On May 17, Lincoln invalidated Hunter’s orders, preferring instead to offer gradual emancipation and to leave the question of arming African-American men until a later time.¹⁵ Hunter, initially and with little notice, ignored Lincoln’s reprimand, continuing to recruit and drill his small band of soldiers.

Tubman applauded Hunter’s actions and probably remained distrustful and wary of Lincoln’s attitudes. She believed Lincoln was shortsighted, and that he was blinded by his inability to see that the war could not be won without the direct participation of black people. In the early days of the war, Lincoln had not yet decided the fates of millions of slaves still held in bondage in the Confederacy. For Tubman and many anti-slavery activists, there was but one decision to make, emancipation. Lydia Maria Child, prominent Boston author and anti-slavery activist, wrote to John Greenleaf Whittier in early 1862 that Tubman told her that she had grave doubts about the future prospects of the war and President Lincoln’s role. “You have doubtless heard of Harriet Tubman, whom they call Moses, on account of the multitude she has brought out of bondage by

her courage and ingenuity,” she wrote to Whittier; “she talks politics sometimes, and her uncouth utterance is wiser than the plans of politicians. She said, the other day;

They may send the flower of their young men down South, to die of the fever in the summer, and the ague¹⁶ in the winter. (For it is cold down there, though it is down South.) They may send them one year, two years, three years, till they are tired of sending, or till they use up all the young men. All no use! God’s ahead of master Lincoln. God won’t let master Lincoln beat the South till he does the right thing. Master Lincoln, he’s a great man, and I am a poor negro; but the negro can tell master Lincoln how to save the money and the young men. He can do it by setting the negroes free. Suppose that was an awful big snake down there, on the floor. He bite you. Folks all scared, because you die. You send for a doctor to cut the bite; but the snake, he rolled up there, and while the doctor doing it, he bite you again. The doctor dug out that bite; but while the doctor doing it, the snake, he spring up and bite you again; so he keep doing it, till you kill him. That’s what master Lincoln ought to know.¹⁷

Tubman, then, played an important role in advancing her cause by helping Union recruitment of black soldiers. When Hunter attempted to recruit former slaves to his First South Carolina Volunteers, few were willing to join. Many of these former slaves were suspicious of whites, regardless of who they were, and were unwilling to leave their families and their newfound liberty on the plantations and in the countryside where they were living. Hunter needed help to persuade them; he may have called on Tubman to reassure the suspicious blacks who “were as much afraid of ‘de Yankee Buckra’ as of their own masters. It was almost impossible to win their confidence, or to get information from them.”¹⁸ When Hunter, frustrated by the slow enlistment of local blacks, started forcibly drafting local African American men into his regiment, he created even more fear and anger among the men and their families. Some were eager and willing to join, while others panicked.¹⁹

Hunter’s efforts to build an African American regiment limped along without support from the Lincoln administration, but his actions did create enough of a stir among

abolitionists and some members of Lincoln's administration to help keep the discussion of emancipation continued behind closed doors at the highest levels of government. By the end of July 1862, Lincoln handed his cabinet a draft resolution to emancipate slaves. By September, the Emancipation Proclamation had been announced to the world; effective January 1, 1863, slaves in those states still in rebellion against the United States were to be freed.²⁰ While the proclamation did not provide freedom for slaves living in border states like Maryland, still loyal to the Union, it marked a dramatic change in the policies of the Lincoln administration.²¹ The Proclamation authorized the call into service of any able-bodied African American who could be of assistance to the Union forces in the South, opening the window for the official establishment of African American regiments.²²

Even before the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was issued, General Rufus Saxton, military governor of the Department of the South, was formally authorized in late August 1862, by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to raise five regiments of black troops. He began with Hunter's disbanded First South Carolina Volunteers, and avoiding Hunter's tactics of conscription, he successfully filled the first regiment by November. He called upon Tubman's old Massachusetts friend, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, to lead the troops, and he enthusiastically agreed. On November 24, 1862, Higginson arrived at Beaufort to take command; within a couple weeks of his arrival he was greeted by Tubman, who had driven the three miles from Beaufort to Camp Saxton, the former Smith plantation where the First South Carolina was quartered, to see him. Higginson wrote to his wife, Mary, that Tubman was living in Beaufort "as a sort of nurse & general caretaker."²³

As a nurse, she faced daily arrivals of sick and dying soldiers and civilians, who were ill not from battle wounds (as little combat was occurring in the region during 1862,) but from contaminated water and food, poor sanitation and hygienic practices, and the particular natural environment found in the Port Royal area. Disease was rampant in the camps; many northerners, whether soldiers or volunteers there to help with relief work, fell victim to the uncontrolled outbreaks of smallpox, dysentery and diarrhea, measles, malaria, scarlet fever, typhoid, pneumonia, and other infections that weakened and killed thousands.²⁴ The Port Royal district, home to innumerable swamps, marshes, creeks, irrigation and drainage ditches, was an ideal breeding ground for mosquitoes which spread malaria and, at times, yellow fever during the warmer months.²⁵ Ticks and fleas thrived in the close living quarters of army camps, spreading typhoid and other infections. On August 28, Henry K. Durant, Assistant Surgeon, told Captain Warfield to “let ‘Moses’ have a little Bourbon whiskey for medicinal purposes.”²⁶ She probably used this in combination with quinine and other drugs and herbs to relieve the symptoms of malaria, and to ease discomfort associated with fevers and other illnesses.²⁷

Tubman was not paid for her nursing duties and relied on her cooking, sewing, and washing skills to make an income. Tubman ran an “eating house” in Beaufort, which may have been for freedmen who had been hired to work in the area, or perhaps for the better-paid officers and their families who could afford to pay for the meals.²⁸ According to Bradford, Tubman would make “about fifty pies, a great quantity of ginger-bread, and two casks of root beer,” then hire “some contraband to sell for her through the camps, and thus she would provide her support for another day.”²⁹ She lived, at least part of the time,

at the “ ‘Savan House opposite the Arsnel,” [sic] not too far from General Saxton’s headquarters and the local “contraband” and military hospitals.³⁰

Charlotte Forten, a young black woman from Salem, Massachusetts, who had come to Port Royal as a teacher with the Pennsylvania Freedmen’s Relief Association in October 1862, recorded spending a day with “Moses” at Beaufort in late January 1863.³¹ Tubman entertained Forten with stories of Underground Railroad rescues, including the flight of Joe Bailey, sang songs, and recalled how a reward of \$10,000 was offered for her capture. “She is a wonderful woman,” Forten wrote, “a real heroine... my own eyes were full as I listened to her.”³² Forten noted, however, that Tubman was eager to return to the North. No doubt Harriet was eager to see her family and make sure they were doing all right without her.³³

General Saxton made a great effort to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation, on the day it became official, January 1, 1863. Word spread, not only through the black regimental camps, but also throughout the countryside and outlying islands composing the Port Royal District, that Saxton was planning a daylong festival, to include a formal reading of the Proclamation. It was bright, clear and warm for the New Year’s Day festivities. Steamers ferried black men, women and children from the various islands to Camp Saxton, and “carriages heavily laden” rolled alongside hundreds of “foot passengers” and people riding various kinds of pack animals to the “great celebration.”³⁴ An estimated 4,000 African-Americans, now free, crowded the festivities. Dressed in their “best attire,” the freedmen continued to stream into “a beautiful grove of live oaks, whose fresh glittering leaves, and gray hanging moss,” welcomed them all under its “canopy.”³⁵ The women, “picturesque” in “bright colored turbans,” gave the event an air

of gaiety.³⁶ Mingling with the crowd, the soldiers of the First South Carolina stood out, their swords “gleaming” against their blue coats and dark red pants.³⁷

Dr. William Brisbane, a former Sea Island planter who had freed his slaves some twenty-five years before, read the Proclamation to the crowd; Higginson was then presented with a flag for his black regiment, at which point a “spontaneous” performance of “My Country, ‘Tis of Thee,” erupted from the freedmen.³⁸ Two members of the First South Carolina, Sergeant Prince Rivers and Corporal Robert Sutton, addressed the crowd, urging freedmen to join and fight for the liberation of others still held in bondage. The three-hour ceremony ended with a rousing rendition of “John Brown’s Body.”³⁹

In Tubman’s eyes, the Emancipation Proclamation was only a half step. She recognized the political advantages and disadvantages of the proclamation, but she wanted more. The war would not be won with the freeing of *some* enslaved people in the South – they should all be free. She later told Sarah Bradford that while everyone was celebrating the proclamation, she was asked “why do you not join with the rest in their rejoicing!” Recalling her dream three years earlier while staying at the home of Henry Highland Garnet in New York, where she envisioned the emancipation of all slaves, Tubman replied, “I had *my* jubilee three years ago. I rejoiced all I could then; I can’t rejoice no more.”⁴⁰

She set her sights instead on participating more directly in armed conflict, bringing herself in closer contact with generals and other officers. Tubman’s reputation as “Moses” was obviously known in the camps; stories of her raids on the Eastern Shore inspired admiration and respect from some soldiers, and her relationship with white

people in positions of power, like Higginson, must have also played a role in making her a leader in the camps among the freedmen.

Tubman had been able to avoid the distrust local freedmen felt toward northern whites. She effectively ferreted out information on rebel locations and movements from the local black population, and passed it along to Generals Stevens, Sherman and Hunter.⁴¹ Before long, Tubman was scouting into the interior regions, beyond the occupied areas of Port Royal district, up the rivers and streams to assess rebel troop activities, offering “much and very valuable service acting as a spy within the enemy lines.”⁴² She gained the confidence of several local men: Isaac Hayward, Mott Blake, Gabriel Cahern, Sandy Sellers, George Chisholm, Solomon Gregory, Peter Burns, Charles Simmons, Samuel Hayward and Walter D. Plowden, who, through her influence, became “the most valued scouts and pilots in the Gov’t employ in that Department.”⁴³ On January 7, 1863, Tubman was given a requisition for one hundred dollars “secret service money.”⁴⁴ With these funds, she and her band of scouts could support themselves and also bribe nervous informants, like slaves still living in Confederate-controlled territory nearby, for crucial and necessary information.

Tubman moved easily about the physical landscape: the geography of Port Royal district was very similar to the landscape of Dorchester County and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Numerous bays, rivers, streams, creeks, marshes and swamps divided the land defined daily life much in the same way water defined life in Dorchester County. The water was both a barrier between, and a means of access to, various places in the district. For Tubman, these barriers were not insurmountable, and she found herself quite comfortable navigating both on land and by water. Although the fields sprouted rice and

cotton rather than the grain and cereal of the Eastern Shore, the sameness of the physical landscape worked to Tubman's advantage.

At first, the efforts of Tubman and others to recruit for the Second South Carolina Volunteers (African descent) had been slow, but when the Emancipation Proclamation was formally enacted and announced on January 1, 1863, many more former slaves, until then suspicious and reluctant, decided to join. On February 24, 1863, Col. James Montgomery arrived at Port Royal to take command of the 2nd South Carolina.⁴⁵ Montgomery had been a comrade of John Brown's, "a veteran gorilla of the Kansas wars," during the late 1850s, fighting pro-slavery forces long before the start of the Civil War with the South.⁴⁶ Montgomery was the commander of the Third Kansas Infantry at the start of the War; which was transferred to the Department of the South to become the foundation of Hunter's next black regiment, the Second South Carolina Volunteers.

Tubman was soon introduced to Col. James Montgomery, and developed a close working relationship with the Kansas freedom fighter. Though Tubman had known Higginson prior to the war, she and Montgomery had far more in common. Montgomery wrote that he had been "acquainted with [Tubman's] character and actions for several years" just a few short months after he had arrived at Port Royal. It is likely that he had heard of her association with Brown from Brown himself, and, therefore, knew of the respect Brown felt for her.⁴⁷ While Higginson, Tubman and Montgomery shared an adoration of John Brown, Montgomery had fought beside Brown, had risked his life to defend free soil, and in him Tubman saw a similarity to Brown, including the willingness to resort to extreme measures to secure the demise of slavery.⁴⁸ Her partnership with

Montgomery would draw Tubman into direct, armed conflict and position her to witness some of the most horrific fighting in the Department of the South.

Within two weeks of his arrival at Port Royal, Montgomery led his regiment, along with Higginson's 1st South Carolina, to capture and occupy Jacksonville, Florida in early March 1863. They met little resistance, though there were small skirmishes and pockets of fighting, giving some of the black troops their first taste of battle. Both Higginson and Montgomery hoped to recruit more former slaves into their regiments, but to their great disappointment, local slave owners had fled with all their "able-bodied" slaves to the interior.⁴⁹ Montgomery, at least, was able to secure a few thousand dollars worth of confiscated cotton and other supplies, but only thirty new recruits. Whether Tubman joined them on this expedition is not known, although the regiments were accompanied by the usual assortment of laundresses, cooks, nurses, surgeons and other medical personnel, as well as scouts and spies. Like Susie King Taylor, a former slave from Savannah, Georgia, who served as a teacher, nurse and laundress during the Civil War in the Department of the South, Tubman often followed troops into battle, if not as a scout and spy, then as a nurse, cook, or laundress.⁵⁰

On February 19, Major General Hunter wrote out a military pass for Tubman: "Pass the bearer, Harriet Tubman, to Beaufort and back to this place, and wherever she wishes to go; and give her free passage at all times, on all Government transports. Harriet was sent to me from Boston by Governor Andrew, of Massachusetts, and is a valuable woman. She has permission, as a servant of the Government, to purchase such provisions from the Commissary as she may need."⁵¹ These provisions, including flour, sugar, molasses, whiskey, and assorted other items, were used in cooking and administering

nursing services to the sick and wounded.⁵² That such broad powers and freedom of movement were granted to a black woman seems extraordinary; the language of the pass indicates not only familiarity with Tubman's past accomplishments, but also an acknowledgment of her future importance to Hunter and other officers. She was already engaged in several espionage trips into the interior; as a sort of free agent, Tubman would not be hindered by the necessity of obtaining individual passes from various officers in command at different locations throughout the district. A cook and a laundress one day, spy the next, Tubman continuously reinvented herself, adapting to and accommodating the immediate requirements of wartime crises with stunning success.

On June 1st, 1863, Tubman became the first woman to plan and execute an armed expedition during the Civil War. Acting as an advisor to Montgomery, Tubman led a raid from Port Royal to the interior, some twenty-five miles up the nearby Combahee River. Using communication networks that were the provenance of black mariners, Tubman's successful spy mission provided crucial details about rebel enforcements and heavily mined waters. Leaving under the cover of darkness, the steam-driven gunboats *John Adams*, *Harriet A. Weed*, and *Sentinel*, moved slowly along the river with 300 men from the 2nd South Carolina and a smaller contingent from the 3rd Rhode Island Battery.⁵³ The *Adams* and the *Harriet Weed* were about a quarter of a mile apart; Harriet stood with Montgomery and another officer in the lead boat, the *Adams*, with Walter Plowden, the "principle" scout on this particular raid who helped direct the group around the mines.⁵⁴ After locating many "torpedoes," the pilots of the *Adams*, the *Harriet Weed*, and the *Sentinel* were able to navigate through the channels of the river without incident.⁵⁵ Under Tubman's leadership, and with the help of trusted and loyal scouts,

Montgomery and his small force made their way to the plantations where Tubman and her scouts had identified Confederate warehouses and stockpiles of rice and cotton.⁵⁶

At about dawn on June 2nd, with fog rolling slowly off the rice fields, Montgomery landed some of his black troops, sending them into the fields and woods to rustle out any Confederates hiding in wait, and to warn the slaves, telling them to come to the river and join Lincoln's "gun-boats."⁵⁷ The troops effectively dispersed Confederate gunners located at various points along the river and met with little resistance. Montgomery and his men set fire to several of the plantations, destroying homes, barns, rice mills, and steam engines, and they confiscated thousands of dollars worth of rice, corn, cotton, horses and other farm animals. What they could not take with them they destroyed. "We broke the sluice gates," the regiment's surgeon reported to *Harper's Weekly*, "and flooded the fields so that the present crop, which was growing beautifully, will be a total loss."⁵⁸ The plantations of Dr. R. L. Baker, Oliver Middleton, Andrew Burnett, William Kirkland, Joshua Nicholls, James Paul, Charles Lowndes and William C. Heyward were pillaged and destroyed, and their slaves fled to the Union boats.⁵⁹ Montgomery made his way to Combahee Ferry, where he ordered the destruction of the pontoon bridge.⁶⁰

Montgomery also ordered the whistles blown on the steamers, signaling to the area's enslaved people to abandon the plantations and fields and come aboard the ships.⁶¹ Tubman recalled that some of the slaves were reluctant to join them, though most quickly realized that "Lincoln's gun-boats [had] come to set them free."⁶² Overseers and plantation owners and managers tried in vain to keep the slaves from running away; brandishing whips, guns and pistols, their threats of punishment, and even death, were almost useless against the mass desertion.⁶³ Several slaves were killed or wounded,

however, by rebel soldiers and others “as they swarmed to the protection of the old flag.”⁶⁴

Tubman later recalled to Bradford that she had never seen anything like the scene that unfolded.⁶⁵ Women and men, arms laden with children, food, clothing and other personal items streamed from the fields to the riverbanks. “Some had white blankets on their heads with their things done up in them... Some had bags on their backs with pigs in them; some had chickens tied by the legs,” Tubman recalled.⁶⁶ One woman had “a pail on her head, rice a smokin’ in it just as she’d taken it from the fire, a young one hangin’ on behind, one hand around her forehead to hold on... [and a] hold of her dress two or three more [children].”⁶⁷ With squealing pigs, squawking chickens and crying children, the cacophony alone was extraordinary. Tubman recalled that it reminded her of “the children of Israel, coming out of Egypt.”⁶⁸

Montgomery sent small boats to the riverbanks to retrieve the liberated slaves, but the arrival of the boats produced a tremendous amount of confusion and panic. Many of the boats became dangerously overcrowded as men, women, and children scrambled to get aboard. Unable to get a spot to be rowed to the steamships, some of the people held on so that the boats could not leave without them. The “oarsmen [had to] beat them on their hands, but they would not let go; they were afraid the gun-boats would go off and leave them.”⁶⁹ It was turning into an alarming situation. Montgomery, eager to get away from the banks of the river and avoid a rebel attack, urged Tubman to encourage the newly liberated slaves to stay calm and assure them that all would be taken onto the boats and away to freedom: “Moses Garrison... come here and speak a word of consolation to your people.”⁷⁰ But Harriet did not consider them her “people.” She later told Emma

Telford that they “wasn’t my people any more than they was his - only we was all Negroes – ‘cause I didn’t know any more about them than he did. So I went when he called me on the gunboat, and they on the shore. They didn’t know anything about me and I didn’t know what to say. I looked at them about two minutes, and then I sung to them.”⁷¹ Tubman’s singing became contagious, the people on the banks starting singing and clapping their hands, shouting “Glory!” to her melody. They let go of the boats, and the evacuation continued safely until Montgomery had brought away somewhere in the neighborhood of 730 “contrabands.”⁷²

They all spent the night of June 2nd on board the steamboats, making their way back to Beaufort; a violent storm during night probably made the passage uncomfortable, but by morning the sun was shining brightly.⁷³ The refugees were led from the boats to a church in Beaufort, where they were housed temporarily while arrangements could be made for their settlement elsewhere. Montgomery delivered an address to them, which was followed by a speech from Tubman, “the black woman who led the raid,” a reporter from the *Wisconsin State Journal*, who witnessed the victorious return, wrote, “and under whose supervision it was originated and conducted. For sound sense and real native eloquence, her address would do honor to any man, and it created quite a sensation.”⁷⁴ Headlining the triumphant story to his readers, the reporter powerfully acknowledged Tubman’s role as “*A Black She “Moses” - Her Wonderful Daring and Sagacity.*”

Col. Montgomery and his gallant band of 300 hundred black soldiers, under the guidance of a black woman, dashed into the enemies’ country, struck a bold and effective blow, destroying millions of dollars worth of commissary stores, cotton, and lordly dwellings, and striking terror to the heart of rebellion, brought off near 800 slaves and thousands of dollars worth of property, without losing a man or receiving a scratch! It was a glorious consummation.⁷⁵

The reporter, quite taken with Tubman's accomplishments, devoted considerable space on the role of "this black heroine." Though he incorrectly stated that she was a former slave from Virginia, he highlighted Tubman's activities, "effecting the escape of over 180 slaves" during "nine successful trips in different slave states." Since the war, he wrote, she had, many times, "penetrated the enemy's lines and discovered their situation and condition, and escaped without extreme hazard... In patriotism, sagacity, energy, ability, and all that elevates human character, she is head and shoulders above the many who vaunt their patriotism and boast their philanthropy, swaggering of their superiority because of the cuticle in which their Creator condescended to envelop them."⁷⁶ His recognition of her accomplishment underscores the ways in which the legend of Harriet Tubman as a heroic figure was constructed and established even during her own lifetime. She was the heroine of the day.

Back in Boston, the *Commonwealth* picked up the story of the "Black 'she Moses'," publishing part of it, and pointing out to its readers that the woman heralded in the article was none other than Harriet Tubman. Tubman, in fact, had dictated a letter to Sanborn informing him of the raid herself. She was extremely proud of the successful mission, and asked Sanborn if he didn't think "we colored people are entitled to some credit for that exploit, under the lead of the brave Colonel Montgomery? We weakened the rebels somewhat on the Combahee River, by taking and bringing away *seven hundred and fifty-six* head of their most valuable live stock, known up in your region as "contrabands," and this, too, without the loss of a single life on our part, though we had good reason to believe that a number of rebels bit the dust. Of these seven hundred and fifty-six contrabands nearly or quite all the able-bodied men have joined the colored regiments

here.”⁷⁷ Sanborn, then editor of the *Commonwealth*, corrected some of the errors in the *Wisconsin* account and informed his readers that part of her “remarkable history” would be revealed in the next issue.⁷⁸

From a military standpoint, it was a productive raid for Montgomery, too. He gained another 100 to 180 new recruits for his regiment.⁷⁹ Tubman claimed she brought nearly one hundred of the contrabands to the recruiting officer’s headquarters herself, and that she should have been paid for it but never was.⁸⁰ The confiscation of supplies of rice, cotton and livestock was a great coup for Montgomery, but many officers disagreed with his “guerilla” tactics. Higginson “utterly” detested Montgomery’s “burning and pillaging.”⁸¹ Robert Gould Shaw, the commander of the famous northern black regiment, the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Colored Infantry, also disliked Montgomery’s tactics, though he admired him greatly for his devotion to the cause. Montgomery was “enormously energetic,” but a “bush-whacker,” Shaw wrote, “[and] considers that praying, shooting, burning [and] hanging are the true means to put down the rebellion.”⁸²

Tubman and Montgomery apparently agreed on this point, but Higginson could not abide by it. He complained often in his letters and diary about Montgomery, and he was pleased when General Hunter was relieved of his command and replaced by General Quincy Gillmore, someone whom Higginson thought would exercise more control over the Department and Montgomery.⁸³ Sanborn later wrote that, under Montgomery’s command, Tubman performed some of “her best service in S. Carolina; but her direct way of interpreting orders, and Montgomery’s soldierly way of acting under general orders, offended the more fastidious Col. Higginson, and led to censures by him of both Montgomery and Harriet.”⁸⁴

On June 5th Tubman was called to testify at the court martial trial of Private John E. Webster. Private Webster had been assigned to the superintendent position at Beaufort, assigning work tasks to freedmen, including stevedore positions on the wharves and docks, carpentry, cutting and hauling wood, and other tasks required for the functioning of military and civilian life in and around Beaufort, and doling out rations of food and other supplies from the commissary.⁸⁵ He was charged that day with “embezzling and misapplying Military stores,” including two counts for selling Tubman brown sugar on two different occasions. Another charge was for selling sugar to Walter D. Plowden, Tubman’s fellow scout and spy.⁸⁶

The unprecedented testimony of blacks against a white defendant marks an important moment in the Port Royal experiment. Benjamin Guterman argues, in his article on the trial, that because of the nature of the abolitionist influence in the Port Royal district, evolving efforts were directed at teaching the freedmen the basics of citizenship. Though the civil status of the former slaves was still a contested issue even in the North, a new opportunity presented itself in this wartime environment, one that required an adjustment to accepted norms of political and civil rights. Though tentative at first, the Emancipation Proclamation, Guterman writes, made the freedmen “irrevocably free” and thus required that they “be guaranteed certain basic legal powers,” such as testify under oath. In Port Royal, the freedmen were experiencing legal, social, and civil rights not enjoyed by African Americans elsewhere.⁸⁷

It was this “transition” in black rights that allowed Tubman, Plowden, and four other black witnesses to testify before the court on June 5th.⁸⁸ Webster, Tubman testified, had sold her brown sugar twice; unbeknown to her, the sugar was part of the inventory of

military stores and therefore not available for sale. Webster was supposed to provide these supplies in the form of rations to the freedmen working for the government and to the regiments in his jurisdiction.⁸⁹

Tubman had purchased approximately fifty or sixty pounds of sugar from Webster on two separate occasions; the exact price and amount she could not recall. Plowden had done the same, (one hundred and fifty pounds, at “fourteen cents a pound”) and later purchased coffee and other items.⁹⁰ Tubman and Plowden then tried to sell these items in and around Beaufort, raising the suspicions of another local shopkeeper, John Lilly, who suspected they had stolen the items. When Lilly confronted Tubman in Webster’s presence, Webster admitted that he had indeed sold her the sugar. Webster later asked Lilly to keep the information to himself, but it was too late; Tubman had immediately gone to General Saxton and told him of her own suspicions.⁹¹ Based on the testimony of all the witnesses, both black and white, Webster was convicted of illegally selling army supply rations and sentenced to “six months of labor without pay.”⁹² As the testimony indicates, Tubman’s stature with General Saxton and other officers in the district was well known and had protected her; it also reveals her easy access to those at the highest levels of command.

While Tubman was testifying on the 5th, Montgomery led his regiment down the coast to capture Darien, Georgia.⁹³ Tubman stayed behind to help the newly arrived freedmen from the Combahee raid. “Most of those coming from the mainland are very destitute, almost naked,” she wrote Sanborn in a dictated letter, “I am trying to find places for those able to work, and provide for them as best I can, so as to lighten the

burden on the Government as much as possible, while at the same time they learn to respect themselves by earning their own living.”⁹⁴

She was still struggling to earn money to support herself, though, while also trying to save enough money to send home to her family. She had received letters from Auburn, “urging” her to “come home,” because her elderly parents needed her “care and attention.”⁹⁵ She hoped that Sanborn would see to it that they were taken care of and that they would not be allowed “to suffer.” She privately reminded Sanborn that he had told her “some time ago that you would furnish me with a small sum of money every year to help me carry on my work.”⁹⁶

Sanborn published her letter in the *Commonwealth* on July 17, at the conclusion of a very early biographical sketch of her life. Using notes he had taken from interviews with Tubman in the late 1850s and early 1860s, Sanborn drew a detailed, though brief sketch of Tubman’s life in slavery and her rescue missions to bring away family and friends during the 1850s. His sketch constituted the first biography of Tubman ever to be published.⁹⁷ Sanborn offered the portrait in the hope that his readers would send Tubman the “contributions” she obviously needed to continue her work in South Carolina and to help support her needy parents in Auburn, “for none is better deserved.”⁹⁸ Within three days, a one hundred dollar payment was made on Tubman’s mortgage debt to William Seward.⁹⁹

She also asked Sanborn to let it be “known to the ladies” that she needed “a *bloomer* dress, made of some coarse, strong material, to wear on *expeditions*.” Invented by Amelia Bloomer, a suffragist and reformer, the dress was actually a modified pantaloons that combined the ease and comfort of pants with the more feminine look of a dress. The

source of much ridicule and the subject of many jokes at the expense of the suffragist movement and suffragists, who were perceived as, literally wanting to wear “the pants,” or take over men’s roles in society, the bloomer dress never really attained much public acceptance. But for a woman like Tubman, they had immense practical applications. She had lost all of her clothes during the fall of 1862, when Beaufort had to be evacuated temporarily and she was too sick to look after them. She explained to Sanborn:

all my clothes were packed and sent with others to Hilton Head, and lost; and I have never been able to get any trace of them since... In our late expedition up the Combahee River, in coming on board the boat, I was carrying *two pigs* for a poor sick woman, who had a child to carry, and the order "double quick" was given, and I started to run, stepped on my dress, it being rather long, and fell and tore it almost off, so that when I got on board the boat, there was hardly anything left of it but shreds. I made up my mind then I would never wear a long dress on another expedition of the kind, but would have a *bloomer* as soon as I could get it... for I expect to have use for it very soon, probably before they can get it to me.¹⁰⁰

Whether Tubman participated in any more raids over the next few weeks is unknown. By the first of July, plans were in the making for an assault on Charleston, under the leadership of General Gillmore, and the regiments in the Port Royal district were mobilized for action. It would be an immense undertaking and a difficult fight. After days of bombardment and combat, Gillmore was certain that the Confederate defenses on Morris Island at Fort Wagner had been debilitated enough for a frontal assault. Others, however, thought the defenses had not been damaged and that the Union assault forces would be exposed “like a flock of sheep.”¹⁰¹ On the morning of July 17th, the Massachusetts 54th under the command of Col. Robert Gould Shaw, was called into action, and readied for the assault.¹⁰² On the evening of the 18th, they moved into position on the beachhead on Morris Island, opposite Fort Wagner, in preparation for their attack the following morning.

Tubman had followed the regiments up the coast to their positions outside Charleston harbor. Probably there as a nurse and cook, but perhaps even as a scout, Tubman witnessed the carnage inflicted upon the 54th Massachusetts on July 19th at Fort Wagner.¹⁰³ She later told an interviewer that she served Col. Robert Gould Shaw his last meal.¹⁰⁴ She had probably become quite familiar with Shaw and his regiment since they had arrived in Beaufort six weeks before. Frederick Douglass's two sons, Lewis and Charles, were members of the 54th, and Tubman no doubt knew both young men.¹⁰⁵

Tubman's description of that fateful day as stunning in its poetic form as it was haunting, would long be remembered: "And then we saw the lightning, and that was the guns; and then we heard the thunder, and that was the big guns; and then we heard the rain falling, and that was the drops of blood falling; and when we came to get in the crops, it was the dead that we reaped."¹⁰⁶ Union losses were horrific: 1,515 dead, wounded, missing or captured, compared to only 174 Confederate casualties. The Massachusetts 54th was particularly hard hit: 256 casualties, many of them missing and presumed dead.¹⁰⁷

The wounded were transported to Beaufort, where Tubman tended to them. Charles A. Smith, a member of the 54th Massachusetts, recalled meeting Tubman when she was assigned by Montgomery to provide nursing and comfort to the wounded and dying soldiers felled during the Wagner assault.¹⁰⁸ Tubman told Sarah Bradford of the dreadful conditions and the difficult environment in which they had to care for the wounded and ill soldiers:

I'd go to the hospital, I would, early every morning. I'd get a big chunk of ice, I would, and put it in a basin, and fill it with water; then I'd take a sponge and begin. First man I'd come to, I'd thrash away the flies, and they'd rise, they would, like bees round a hive. Then I'd begin to bathe their wounds, and by the

time I'd bathed off three or four, the fire and heat would have melted the ice and made the water warm, and it would be as red as clear blood. Then I'd go and get more ice, I would, and by the time I got to the next ones, the flies would be round de first ones, black and thick as ever.¹⁰⁹

The fighting in Charleston Harbor continued through to the first week of September. Wounded and ill soldiers continued to overwhelm the hospitals at Beaufort. Tubman probably worked day and night caring for the sick and wounded men, while also trying to support herself by baking and cooking in between shifts at the hospital.¹¹⁰ Women all over the islands were asked to serve in the hospitals: wives of officers, teachers in the freedmen's schools, like Charlotte Forten, and others offered their services.¹¹¹ It is not difficult to imagine Tubman's exhaustion. Given her own fragile health, it is a wonder that she managed to maintain herself and survive through the summer and part of the fall, unlike many other volunteers who fell victim to the heat, disease and exhaustion.¹¹²

Tubman eventually took a leave sometime in the late fall of 1863. She had not seen her family in over eighteen months, and there had been a few changes since her last visit to Auburn. Her sister-in-law, Catherine, who had buried her little boy, seventeen-month-old Adam Stewart the previous February, had just given birth to another child, a daughter, Hester.¹¹³ In addition, Tubman found her family and friends in Auburn working hard, trying to make ends meet; many of them were employed as coachmen and servants for the wealthier white families, some of them close friends of Tubman's, while others were day laborers or worked in the local factories.¹¹⁴ Thomas Elliott, in fact, had moved to Auburn, and was living on South Street in Auburn in a house owned by William H. Seward.¹¹⁵ By early November Tubman had traveled to Canada, visiting with her brother William Henry, who was then living on a small farm in Grantham on the outskirts of St.

Catherine's, Ontario, with his growing family.¹¹⁶ She may, in fact, have accompanied Samuel Gridley Howe on his fact-finding trip to Canada for the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission to investigate the conditions of fugitives living there. Given her connections in the St. Catharines community, she would have been a likely choice to provide introductions to local former slaves still living there. She may have also been trying to recruit men to serve in black regiments in the South. Tubman left, however, by mid November and returned to service in South Carolina, where General Gillmore immediately ordered her to Folley Island, just south of Morris Island.¹¹⁷

In February 1864, George Garrison, the son of William Lloyd Garrison, who was stationed at Folly's Island, South Carolina, ran into Tubman while on a day excursion with friends from Boston. Tubman herself was by then stationed at Folly's Island. Writing to his brother, William Lloyd Garrison II, George described Tubman's surprise upon seeing him: "When we entered where she was at work ironing some clothes, Mrs. Severance went to introduce me by saying here is George Garrison, she no sooner saw me than she recognized me at once, and instantly threw her arms around me, and gave me quite an affectionate embrace, much to the amusement of those with me." She was "cooking and washing clothes at Gen'l Terry's quarters, who is now in command of Morris and Folly Islands," Garrison told his brother. Tubman wanted to go home, though, but General Gillmore would not allow her to; "He thinks her services are too valuable to loose. She has made it a business to see all contrabands escaping from the rebels, and is enable to get more intelligence from them than anybody else."¹¹⁸

They talked for a while; Tubman told Garrison and his friends that she was trying save some money to send home to her parents, but that she had recently been robbed of

fifty dollars. Caroline Severance offered to take the money Tubman had left and see to it that it reached her parents. Whether it was Tubman's intention or not, it appeared she never let an opportunity go by that could help her raise money. Though Garrison was, indeed, concerned for her financial welfare, he also noted that Tubman had "a chance of making a good deal of money here, and can easily get fifty times more work than she can do," stressing Tubman's value as not only a scout and spy, but also a nurse, laundress and cook.¹¹⁹

In the meantime, Montgomery had been sent back to Florida with his black troops. He was joined by a steady stream of white and black regiments under the command of General Seymour, including Garrison's 55th Massachusetts Infantry, and the 8th United States Colored Troops (USCT) from Pennsylvania under the command of Colonel Charles Fribley.¹²⁰ Tubman accompanied these regiments from Folly's Island to Jacksonville, Florida, providing cooking and laundry services, and serving as a nurse as the need arose.¹²¹ Seymour, whose unauthorized strategy was to destroy the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad, ordered the troops under his command to advance toward Lake City; General Gillmore ordered him to halt, but the communiqué reached Seymour too late to stop the advance.¹²²

On February 20th, the Union regiments were met by unexpectedly heavy fire from rebel forces at Olustee. The 8th USCT were newly trained and had never been tested in battle before. Surprise fire from Confederate regiments left the soldiers of the 8th in disarray and confusion, which was exacerbated by Seymour's conflicting orders. Nevertheless, they fought hard and bravely, earning the regiment a place on the rolls of Civil War heroes. In less than two hours, over half the regiment's men were left dead,

wounded or missing in action, including the regiment's commander, Colonel Fribley and several other officers.¹²³ Montgomery's brigade, the 54th Massachusetts and other regiments soon arrived, giving the 8th the chance to withdraw and regroup. But the fire was so heavy, Seymour ordered the retreat of all Union forces on that field, leaving behind hundreds of dead and wounded soldiers. Most of the regiments suffered high losses, but the black regiments suffered the most. The advancing Confederates killed many wounded black soldiers who could not retreat with their regiments.¹²⁴ It was a humiliating failure, and it cost the Union its hoped for control of Florida.

If Tubman had not come with the 55th Massachusetts or with Montgomery's brigade to Florida and witnessed the Battle of Olustee, she most likely was called to Sanderson, where "wounded men lined the railroad station," or to Jacksonville to tend to the hundreds of wounded and exhausted soldiers brought there.¹²⁵ Her services in Florida were noted often by officers, for spying and scouting, as well as for her nursing care.¹²⁶

Tubman's skill at curing soldiers stricken by a variety of diseases was well known. At one point during the war, Tubman was called to Fernandina, Florida, by the Union surgeon in charge, to help cure the men of debilitating and often deadly dysentery. When she arrived, "they was dying off like sheep," she told Emma Telford forty years later. She prepared a medicinal tea "from roots which grew near the water which gave the disease."¹²⁷ She went into the swamps and "dug some roots and herbs and made a tea for the doctor [who had been afflicted with the disease] and the disease stopped on him," she told Telford. "And then he said, 'give it to de soldiers.' So I boiled up a great boiler of roots and herbs, and the General told a man to take two cans and go round and give it to all in the camp that needed it, and it cured them."¹²⁸

It was during one of her assignments in Florida that the “wash house,” which Tubman had paid to be built in Beaufort and where she taught locals to do the washing for the soldiers, was destroyed. The location had been “appropriated by a Reg’t of troops fresh from the North” to make camp for themselves.¹²⁹ The government money she had used to build the laundry was now gone to waste, and the place where she had been earning her own money had been taken away as well. Once again, Tubman had to adjust quickly to a rapidly, and often unexpectedly, changing environment.

Throughout the spring of 1864, Tubman continued to labor for the Department of the South. In early May, Acting Assistant Surgeon Henry K. Durant issued a testimonial to Tubman’s character and “esteem in which she is generally held.” He noted that he had “frequent and ample opportunities to observe her deportment; particularly her kindness and attention to the sick and suffering of her own race.” General Rufus Saxton added, “I concur with the above.”¹³⁰ The purpose of the testimonial is unclear; Tubman may have been seeking a furlough to go home to Auburn, or she may have needed an introduction to other officers in charge, or hospital directors in another area of the Department of the South. She may also have been trying to get some pay for her services to the government. Tubman had been paid little over the two years she had been employed by the Department of the South, much of it probably used to pay other scouts and spies for information.

Military pay for black soldiers had been an issue since the very first black regiments had been formed. Black soldiers were paid \$10 per month, less \$3.00 for clothing. White troops, on the other hand, were paid \$13.00 per month with an additional allowance for clothing. Many black troops, including the 54th Massachusetts, refused to

accept the lesser pay; they waited until September 1864 before they would see equal pay.¹³¹ Getting paid may have been even more problematic for Harriet. She was not a soldier, officially, and her on-again-off-again role as a scout and a spy made consistent payment for her services unlikely. Payments of \$100 or \$200 dollars may have been deemed sufficient, even though she used the money to pay for other scouts' services and information. She was never paid as a Union nurse, which may have been an additional source of irritation for Tubman. Like the black troops, Tubman was performing her jobs as well as her white counterparts, but still was not treated equally.

Nevertheless, Tubman was granted a furlough to go home to see her family sometime in June 1864. On June 20, 1864, Wendell Garrison, another of William Lloyd Garrison's sons, wrote to his brother William, from Brooklyn, New York, that Tubman had just arrived from Port Royal. "Moses Garrison," he wrote, "alias Harriet alias General Tubman has just arrived... What times." Tubman had told him that she had seen their brother George, and that he was "in good health."¹³² She spent part of the summer in Auburn with her family; by early August she was in Boston, making rounds of visits with abolitionist friends.¹³³ Frank Sanborn printed a short notice in the *Commonwealth* that she was in town, staying with Dr. John S. Rock, on Beacon Hill. He noted that Harriet had some reason to complain for "her services to her people and to the army seem to have been very inadequately recompensed by the military authorities."¹³⁴ He again asked for contributions of money or clothing for her support and for distribution to freedmen in the South.¹³⁵

Sojourner Truth was in Boston, then, too, where the two women met.¹³⁶ Truth had long been a very public anti-slavery lecturer, women's and African-American civil rights

activist; born a slave and deeply religious, she and Tubman had much in common. They differed, however, in their assessment of Lincoln. Truth had campaigned for Lincoln and believed he had done much for the betterment of African Americans.¹³⁷ Tubman later told an interviewer that she “didn’t like Lincoln in them days.”¹³⁸ Identifying herself with the thousands of black troops during the Civil War who were paid less than half of white soldiers pay for the same service, Tubman remembered that “we colored people didn’t understand then he was our friend. All we knew was that the first colored troops sent south from Massachusetts only got seven dollars a month, while the white regiments got fifteen. We didn’t like that.”¹³⁹ The women discussed Lincoln and his policies, but Tubman could not be swayed. Later, after Truth had gone to Washington and met with Lincoln, Tubman felt she had been too harsh in her assessment of him. She had heard that Lincoln had been kind to Truth, telling her that he “had done nothing himself; he was only a servant of the country.”¹⁴⁰ This deeply impressed Tubman; she understood the meaning of service to the nation. “I’s sorry now I didn’t see Master Lincoln and thank him,” Tubman recalled thirty years later.¹⁴¹

On October 28th, Tubman passed through Rochester, New York, probably to visit with Anna and Frederick Douglass, the Porters, and other friends living there, on her way to Canada. She received a \$10 donation from the Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society for her work aiding freedmen in the South.¹⁴² She remained in the North at least through late November, when she met with Gerrit Smith in Peterboro, N.Y. He provided her with a testimonial as well, indicating Tubman was still fighting a battle for recognition. “The cause of freedom owes her much,” he wrote, “the country owes her much.”¹⁴³

The New England Freedmen's Aid Society made arrangements for her to be hired as a "practical teacher" in the Hilton Head district.¹⁴⁴ These themes resounded in an account of Tubman's life published in March 1865, by the *Freedmen's Record*, the journal of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society. Ednah Dow Cheney, a writer, abolitionist and friend of Tubman's, penned the article, drew upon Sanborn's sketch in the July 17th, 1863 *Commonwealth*, and her own conversations with Tubman in her portrait.¹⁴⁵ This was the second published biographical account of Tubman's life, drawing attention, once again to her great accomplishments, but also informing an interested public that she was still in need of financial assistance. "This society," Cheney wrote at the conclusion of the sketch, "considers her labors too valuable to the freedmen to be turned elsewhere, and therefore have taken her into their service, paying her a small salary of ten dollars per month that she asks for. She is not adopted by any branch [of the society] as she could not fulfil the condition of correspondence with them."¹⁴⁶ The government's refusal to pay Tubman may have prompted Tubman's Boston friends to devise a means of sending her money to keep her actively involved in the relief efforts in the South.

Exactly when Tubman returned to South Carolina is unclear. Later, Charles P. Wood of Auburn wrote, in Tubman's application for a pension and retroactive pay from the government, that she became ill at this time and remained in New York longer than her furlough allowed. When she was finally able to travel, she was "refused return transportation." Tubman was in Washington during the middle of February, visiting with William H. Seward who loaned her fifty dollars.¹⁴⁷ She made her way to the War Department, perhaps through an introduction from Seward, where she obtained a pass,

dated March 20, 1865, for permission to take a government transport to Hilton Head, S.C.¹⁴⁸

By then, the war was drawing to a close. On April 1st, Tubman appeared at Camp William Penn, outside Philadelphia, where United States Colored Troop regiments were being organized and trained. She spoke to the newly formed 24th USCT regiment, giving them a “thrilling account of her trials in the South, during the past three years, among the contrabands and the soldiers.”¹⁴⁹ The journalist from *The Christian Reporter* noted that she seemed to be “very well known by the community at large, as the great Underground Railroad woman.” She “elicited considerable applause” from the crowd, who then offered her a “liberal collection.”¹⁵⁰

As she was about to make her way to New York City to take passage from there to South Carolina, she was “intercepted at Philadelphia by some members of the Sanitary Commission,” who convinced her to go with them to work in some of the Union hospitals along the James River in Virginia.¹⁵¹ Tubman was persuaded that the need for her services was great, so she changed her plans, traveling instead to Fortress Monroe at Hampton, Virginia to care for sick and wounded black soldiers.¹⁵²

On April 9, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House. Five days later, President Lincoln was dead, and Tubman’s dear friend, William H. Seward, lay gravely wounded from an attack by a would-be assassin, made the night of Lincoln’s assassination. The Civil War was over, but many more hurdles lay ahead before the nation would recover from its wounds and accept African Americans as free and full citizens. For Tubman, these hurdles would also define the remainder of her life.

CHAPTER TEN NOTES

¹ "Manuscript History Concerning the Pension Claim of Harriet Tubman." HR 55A-D1 Papers Accompanying the Claim of Harriet Tubman. Record Group 233. National Archives. Washington, D.C.

² Emma P. Telford. "Harriet: The Modern Moses of Heroism and Visions," Cayuga County Museum, Auburn, NY: circa 1905. 15

³ "Tubman History."

⁴ Telford. "Harriet," 15. "Dey change dey programme an' wanted me to go down and 'tribute clothes to de contraban's who were comin' in to the Union lines night and day. Dey wouldn't let no colored people go down Souf den, unless dey went with some of the officers as a servant; so dey got a gentlemen from New York to take me as a servant. He was stoppin' at a big hotel on Broadway, an I went to de parlor an' dey sent for him an' he came down: but I didn't like dat man no how. He look at me an' said, 'well, I guess you're young enough. You go to the quarter master and tell him I sent you.' But I made up my mind dat I want goin wid dat man. He looked brave an' noble enough to be a gen'man if looks made one, a struttin' about; but I went out an' I aint seen de quarter master yit, nor him neither. So I jus' went on alone to Baltimore, an' General Hunter sent for me to go to Beaufort, an' de vessel dat was goin' dar didn't sail for two days, a waitin' for me till de Generals orders were fulfilled."

⁵ Tubman probably arrived just after Brigadier General Thomas W. Sherman was joined by Major General David Hunter, placing her there by late March, 1862. See Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment rpt. 1964 ed. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1999). 144-145.

⁶ Rose, Rehearsal. xiv.

⁷ Telford. "Harriet," 16

⁸ James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988). 483.

⁹ "Tubman History." See also, Ednah Dow Littlehale Cheney, "Moses," *Freedmen's Record*, March 1865. Susie King Taylor, a former slave who worked in the Union camps at Hilton Head, more specifically for the First South Carolina Volunteers, a black regiment led by Thomas W. Higginson, wrote that the black soldiers wives, local to the area, "were obliged to support themselves and children by washing for the officers of the gunboats and the soldiers, and making cakes and pies which they sold to the boys in camp." See Susie King Taylor, Patricia W. Romero, ed., A Black Woman's Civil War

Memoirs: Reminiscences of My Life in Camp with the 33rd U.S. Colored Troops, Late 1st South Carolina Volunteers 1988 rpt. ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 1902). 42.

¹⁰ "Tubman History."

¹¹ "Tubman History." See also, Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 37-38. Later, Tubman would lose some of the money she earned when it was stolen from her. See, "Letter, George Garrison to William Lloyd Garrison II, February 10, 1864." Garrison Family Papers. Box 28, folder 790. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, Massachusetts.. See also, Tubman testimony, Benjamin Guterman, "Doing 'Good Brave Work': Harriet Tubman's Testimony at Beaufort, South Carolina," *Prologue* 42, no. 3 Fall 2000, (2000): 163.

¹² "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'." Franklin B. Sanborn Papers. Box 1, Folder 5. Box 1, Folder 5, American Antiquarian Society. Worcester, MA.

¹³ Rose, Rehearsal. (Pp. 144-146. See also, Noah Andre Trudeau, Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War, 1862-1865. (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1998). 14-16.

¹⁴ Trudeau, Like Men of War. 14-17.

¹⁵ Rose, Rehearsal. 147-151; see also, McPherson, Battle Cry. 499.

¹⁶ A fever often associated with malaria.

¹⁷ "Letter, Lydia Maria Child to John G. Whittier, January 21, 1862." Lydia Maria Child Papers. Library of Congress. Washington, D.C. "Dey may send de flower of dair young men down South, to die ob de fever in de summer, and de agoo in de winter. (Fur tis cold down dar, dough tis down South) Dey may send dem one year, two years, tree year, till dey tired ob sendin, or till dey use up all de young men. All no use! God's ahead ob massa Linkum. God won't let massa Linkum beat de South till he do de right ting. Massa linkum he great man, and I'se poor nigger; but di nigger can tell massa Linkum how to save de money and de young men. He do it by setting de niggers free. Spose dat was awfu' big snake down dar, on de floor. He bite you. Folks all skeered, cause you die. You send fur doctor to cut de bite; but snake he rolled up dar, and while doctor dwine it, he bite you agin. De doctor dug out dat bite; but while doctor dwine it, de snake he spring up and bite you agin; so he keep dwine, till you kill him. Dat's what massa Linkum oter know."

¹⁸ Bradford, Scenes. 38-39.

¹⁹ Rose, Rehearsal. 146-150.

²⁰ Rose, Rehearsal. 185; see also, Trudeau, Like Men of War. 17-19; and

²¹ See also, McPherson, Battle Cry. 502-505, 557-558. Also, James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964). 111, 117-118. Lincoln also promised a plan for gradual emancipation in loyal states, too, at a later date.

²² Trudeau, Like Men of War. 18-19.

²³ Christopher Looby, ed., The Complete Civil War Journal and Selected Letters of Thomas Wentworth Higginson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000). 250.

²⁴ Margaret E. Wagner, Gary W. Gallagher, and Paul Finkleman, ed., The Library of Congress Civil War Desk Reference (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002). 638-651.

²⁵ Rose, Rehearsal. 171-172. See also, McPherson, Battle Cry. 487-488.

²⁶ Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Sons, 1886). 141. Note, "Henry K. Durant to Capt. Warfield," August 28, 1862.

²⁷ Wagner, ed., Civil War Desk Reference. 646.

²⁸ Charlotte L. Forten, Ray Allen Billington, ed., A Free Negro in the Slave Era: The Journal of Charlotte L. Forten. (New York: Collier Books, 1961). 180

²⁹ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 97.

³⁰ Guterman, "Doing "Good Brave Work"," Tubman testimony, 163.

³¹ Forten, Charlotte Forten. Diary entry, January 31, 1863. p. 180. Forten turned to the Pennsylvania society when the Boston Education Commission wouldn't make a decision about allowing her to go. Forten traveled from her base on St. Helena's Island with Lizzie Hunn, the daughter of John Hunn, a Quaker abolitionist and Underground Railroad operator from Camden Delaware. The Hunns met Forten on the boat coming from Philadelphia to Port Royal in October. The Hunns opened a store on St. Helena's Island, which was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Freedmen's Relief Association, providing supplies to the newly freed slaves. Forten, Charlotte Forten. 32, 138, 188, and 264. Though no documentary evidence exists, Tubman may have stopped at the Hunn's home, near Camden in Delaware, on one or more of her trips bringing runaway slaves out of the Eastern Shore.

³² Forten, Charlotte Forten. 180.

³³ Forten, Charlotte Forten. 180

³⁴ "The Celebration of the Emancipation of the Slaves of the South, on the 1st of January, 1863," *The Free South*, Beaufort, S.C., January 10, 1863.

³⁵ "Celebration of the Emancipation."

³⁶ "Celebration of the Emancipation."

³⁷ "News from South Carolina. Negro Jubilee at Hilton Head," *The New York Herald*, New York, January 7, 1863., and Forten, Charlotte Forten. 172.

³⁸ "Celebration of the Emancipation.", see also, Forten, Charlotte Forten. 172-173; Looby, ed., Higginson., 76-78; Rose, Rehearsal. 196-197.

³⁹ Rose, Rehearsal. 197. For descriptions of the great day at Camp Saxton, see, Forten, Charlotte Forten. (; Looby, ed., Higginson.; and, "Jubilee at Hilton Head.", and "Celebration of the Emancipation."

⁴⁰ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 93.

⁴¹ "Tubman History."

⁴² "Tubman History."

⁴³ "Tubman History." List, signed Brigadier General Rufus Saxton, n.d.

⁴⁴ Guterman, "Doing "Good Brave Work", " 165, fn. 11.

⁴⁵ Russell Duncan, ed., Blue-Eyed Child of Fortune: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Robert Gould Shaw (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1992). 337.

⁴⁶ Rose, Rehearsal. 244. See also, Trudeau, Like Men of War. 13-14.

⁴⁷ "Tubman History." Letter, Montgomery to Brigadier General Gilmore, July 6, 1863. "I wish to commend to your attention Mrs. Harriet Tubman a most remarkable woman, and valuable as a scout. I have been acquainted with her character and actions for several years."

⁴⁸ William E. Connelley, A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1918).

⁴⁹ Trudeau, Like Men of War. 68.

⁵⁰ See Taylor, Reminiscences.

⁵¹ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 140. Tubman may have accompanied Higginson on a successful raid up the St. Mary's River, on the border between Georgia and Florida, at the end of January 1863, but there is no clear evidence that she did so.

⁵² Guterman, "Doing "Good Brave Work", "

⁵³ "Expedition up the Combahee," *The Port Royal New South*, Beaufort, S.C., June 6, 1863.

⁵⁴ Telford. "Harriet," See also, Bradford, Scenes. 39; and "Tubman History."

⁵⁵ Telford. "Harriet,"

⁵⁶ Col. James Montgomery. "Report of Col. James Montgomery, 2nd S.C. Colored Volunteers by Telegraph from Beaufort, June 3rd, 1863, to Major General D. Hunter," Records of Assistant Commissioner for the State of South Carolina Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1870, Beaufort, S.C.: June 3,. See also, "Colonel Montgomery's Raid - the Rescued Black Chattels - a`Black She "Moses" - Her Wonderful Daring and Sagacity - the Black Regiments - Col. Higginson's Mistakes - Arrival of the 54th Massachusetts, &C., &C.," *The Wisconsin State Journal*, Madison, Wisconsin, June 20, 1863.; "Expedition."

⁵⁷ Bradford, Scenes. 40-41; see also, Telford. "Harriet,"

⁵⁸ "Raid among the Rice Plantations," *Harper's Weekly*, New York, July 4, 1863.

⁵⁹ "The Enemy Raid on the Banks of the Combahee," *The Charleston Mercury*, Charleston, S.C., June 4, 1863.

⁶⁰ "Enemy Raid." ; see also, "Expedition."

⁶¹ "Expedition."

⁶² Bradford, Scenes. 40

⁶³ "Expedition." ; Bradford, Scenes. 40; "Raid."

⁶⁴ "Raid."

⁶⁵ Bradford, Scenes. 40

⁶⁶ Telford. "Harriet," "Some had white blankets on dere haids with dere things done up in 'em... Some had bags on dere backs with pigs in dem; some had chickens tied by de laigs."

⁶⁷ Bradford, Scenes. 40

⁶⁸ Telford. "Harriet," ("ob de chillern ob Israel, comin' out 'ob Egypt.")

⁶⁹ Bradford, Scenes. 41

⁷⁰ Telford. "Harriet," Telford wrote, quoting Harriet, "Moses Garrison... come here an' speak a word ob consolation to your people."

⁷¹ Telford. "Harriet," "Well dey wasn't my people any more dan dey was his'n, - only we was all Negroes - cos I didn't know any more about 'em dan he did. So I went when he called me on de gun boat, an dey 'on de shore. Dey didn't know any ting about me an' I didn't know what to say. I looked at 'em about two minutes, an' den I sung to 'em."⁷¹ Moses, you'll have to give 'em a song." 19. This was not the only time that Tubman tried to point out that the shade of one's skin did not make them all the same, nor did skin color transcend social and cultural differences, differences which were often ignored by whites, within the black community. She told Sarah Bradford that when she was in South Carolina, she too had difficulty understanding some of the freedmen, and found some of their customs far different than ones she had grown up with. "Why, der language down dar in de far South is jus' as different from ours in Maryland, as you can think," said she. "Dey laughed when dey heard me talk, an' I could not understand dem, no how." She went on to describe a funeral service for a former slave, which seemed foreign to her. 42-43

⁷² Telford. "Harriet," 19; see also, Bradford, Scenes. 41-42. Various reports give numbers that range from 725 to 840 contrabands. Montgomery wrote 725, in Montgomery. "Montgomery Report, June 3, 1863," ; Tubman indicated 756, in Franklin Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, July 17, 1863.; the *Port Royal New South* published 727, in "Expedition."; and the *Wisconsin State Journal* used the figure "near 800," in "Black She 'Moses'."; and Corporal James Henry Gooding, of the Massachusetts 54th, wrote in his correspondence, 840, in Virginia M. Adams, ed., On the Alter of Freedom: A Black Soldier's Civil War Letters from the Front. Corporal James Henry Gooding (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1991). 28. Bradford recorded the song that Tubman sang that day (Bradford, Scenes. "Harriet lifted up her voice and sang:

Of all the whole creation in the east or in the west,
The glorious Yankee nation is the greatest and the best.
Come along! Come along! don't be alarmed,
Uncle Sam is rich enough to give you all a farm."

Emma Telford recorded a slightly different version forty years later (Telford. "Harriet," 19):

"Come from de East;
Come from de West;
Mong all de glorious nations
Dis glorious one's de bes;

Come 'long! Come 'long! Don't be alarmed,
For Uncle Sam is rich enough
To gave you all a farm."

⁷³ "Extracts from the Journal of an Officer in the 54th Regt. Mass. Vols," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, June 26, 1863.

⁷⁴ "Black She 'Moses'."

⁷⁵ "Black She 'Moses'."

⁷⁶ "Black She 'Moses'."

⁷⁷ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." Bradford, *Scenes*. 86

⁷⁸ Franklin B. Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 10]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, July 10, 1863.

⁷⁹ The actual number is unknown.

⁸⁰ Telford. "Harriet,"

⁸¹ Looby, ed., *Higginson*. 288-289.

⁸² Duncan, ed., *Blue-Eyed Child*. 339 and 356.

⁸³ See Looby, ed., *Higginson*.; and Tilden Edelstein, *Strange Enthusiasm: A Life of Thomas Wentworth Higginson*. (New York: Atheneum, 1970). 286-287; and Mary Thatcher Higginson, ed., *Letters and Journals of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 1846-1906* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921). 206-209.

⁸⁴ "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'."

⁸⁵ Guterman, "Doing "Good Brave Work"," 158-159.

⁸⁶ As quoted in Guterman, "Doing "Good Brave Work"," 159

⁸⁷ Guterman, "Doing "Good Brave Work"," 159

⁸⁸ Guterman, "Doing "Good Brave Work"," 159-160. The other black witnesses were Lucius Dobson, Nat Simmons, Isaac Blake, and Thomas Blake. It is not known if the Blakes or Simmons were related to Tubman's other trusted scouts, Mott Blake and Charles Simmons.

⁸⁹ For full details of Tubman's testimony, see Guterman, "Doing "Good Brave Work", "

⁹⁰ Guterman, "Doing "Good Brave Work", " 161.

⁹¹ Guterman, "Doing "Good Brave Work", " 161.

⁹² Guterman, "Doing "Good Brave Work", " 159.

⁹³ Duncan, ed., Blue-Eyed Child. 338-339.

⁹⁴ Letter to Sanborn, written by an amanuensis, June 30, 1863, in Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." See also, Bradford, Scenes. 87.

⁹⁵ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." See also, Bradford, Scenes. 87.

⁹⁶ Kenneth Walter Cameron, Correspondence of Franklin Benjamin Sanborn the Transcendentalist. (Hartford, Connecticut: Transcendental Books, 1982). Letter, Harriet Tubman to Franklin Sanborn, June 30, 1863. p. 24. This part of the letter was not published in the *Commonwealth* article of July 17, 1863.

⁹⁷ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."

⁹⁸ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]."

⁹⁹ "Microfilm Reels 192-193." Seward Papers. Harvard University. Cambridge.. Account book. Entry for July 20, 1863. Another payment had been made the previous April 10, in the amount of \$54.75.

¹⁰⁰ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [July 17]." See also Bradford, Scenes. 85-86.

¹⁰¹ Trudeau, Like Men of War. 80.

¹⁰² For a detailed description of the events leading up to, and the assault on Fort Wagner, by the 54th and other regiments, see, Trudeau, Like Men of War. 71-90; Russell Duncan, Where Death and Glory Meet: Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Infantry. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1999).; Duncan, ed., Blue-Eyed Child; McPherson, Battle Cry. 686-687; and Adams, ed., Gooding. 34-43.

¹⁰³ Montgomery wrote a letter of introduction for her to General Gilmore on July 6, 1863, informing him of Tubman's talents as a spy and a scout. Countersigned by General Rufus Saxton, the letter further indicates Tubman's close association with officers at the highest levels of command in the Department of the South, and their direct knowledge of her accomplishments and skills. See "Tubman History."

¹⁰⁴ Robert W. Taylor, Harriet Tubman: The Heroine in Ebony. (Boston: George E. Ellis, Printer, 1901). 13. See also, "Research Correspondence." Earl Conrad/ Harriet Tubman Collection. Reel 1. Boxes 1 and 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York.. Letter, Hidegard Hoyt Swift to Earl Conrad, September 8, 1939. "She always stoutly maintained that she fed Col. Shaw his last meal etc. and that she was present at this time [of the battle]."

¹⁰⁵ Trudeau, Like Men of War. 72; and Duncan, Where Death. 66.

¹⁰⁶ Albert Bushnell Hart, Slavery and Abolition, 1831-1841, The American Nation: A History, Vol. 16. (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1906). 209.

¹⁰⁷ Trudeau, Like Men of War. 86.

¹⁰⁸ "At Church of Zion. Body of Harriet Tubman Davis Will Lie in State," *Auburn Citizen*, Auburn, N.Y., March 12, 1913.

¹⁰⁹ Bradford, Scenes. 37. "I'd go to de hospital, I would, early eb'ry mornin'. I'd get a big chunk of ice, I would, and put it in a basin, and fill it with water; den I'd take a sponge and begin. Fust man I'd come to, I'd thrash away de flies, an' dey'd rise, dey would, like bees roun' a hive. Den I'd begin to bathe der wounds, an' by de time I'd bathed off three or four, de fire and heat would have melted de ice and made de water warm, an' it would be as red as clar blood. Den I'd go an' git more ice, I would, an' by de time I got to de nex' ones, de flies would be roun' de fust ones, black an' thick as eber."

¹¹⁰ Trudeau, Like Men of War.

¹¹¹ Forten, Charlotte Forten. 214-218. Forten herself left the area within a few weeks of the battle.

¹¹² Rose, Rehearsal. 170-172. See also, Nancy Scripture Garrison, With Courage and Delicacy. Civil War on the Peninsula: Women and the U.S. Sanitary Commission. (Mason City, Iowa: Savas Publishing Company, 1999)., for a description and discussion of the exhaustion and ill health Civil War nurses experienced.

¹¹³ "Deaths." Central Presbyterian Church Records. Central Presbyterian Church. Auburn, N.Y. "February 1, 1863. Adam Stuart. 17 months." See also, New York Census, 1865, Town of Fleming.

¹¹⁴ See Auburn City directories.

¹¹⁵ Auburn Daily Advertiser, Auburn Daily Advertiser City Directory for 1862-63. (Auburn, N.Y.: Knapp & Peck, 1862). 112

¹¹⁶ John W. Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977). In his interview with the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, on or about November 8, 1863, Henry Stewart is quoted as mentioning his "sister, (the one that is now here)." See also, original manuscript interview, Samuel Gridley Howe, Canadian Testimony, American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission. (Washington, D.C.: Record Group 93, Reel 201. National Archives, 1863). The interviews taken in St. Catherines appear to have taken place on November 8, 1863. Also, Mildred Myers places Emily Howland in Auburn in the late fall, either late October or early November, 1863, where she met Harriet Tubman while visiting Fanny Seward at the Seward House. Mildred D. Meyers, Miss Emily. Emily Howland, Teacher of Freed Slaves, Suffragist, and Friend of Susan B. Anthony and Harriet Tubman. (Charlotte Harbor, Florida: Tabby House, 1998). 63-64.

¹¹⁷ "Letter, G. Garrison to W.L.G. Ii, Feb. 10, 1864."

¹¹⁸ "Letter, G. Garrison to W.L.G. Ii, Feb. 10, 1864."

¹¹⁹ "Letter, G. Garrison to W.L.G. Ii, Feb. 10, 1864."

¹²⁰ Trudeau, Like Men of War. 135.

¹²¹ Bradford, Scenes. Gerald Schwartz, ed., A Woman Doctor's Civil War: Esther Hill Hawks' Diary (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1984). "Letter, G. Garrison to W.L.G. Ii, Feb. 10, 1864."; Telford. "Harriet,"

¹²² Trudeau, Like Men of War. 137.

¹²³ Trudeau, Like Men of War. 152.

¹²⁴ Trudeau, Like Men of War. 150.

¹²⁵ Trudeau, Like Men of War. 150.

¹²⁶ See Bradford, Scenes. ; and "Tubman History." See also, Schwartz, ed., Hill Diary. 79. Hawk's mentions Tubman, "Moses", as being in the camp there at the end of May 1864.

¹²⁷ Telford. "Harriet," 16.

¹²⁸ Telford. "Harriet," 16. "... dey was dying off like sheep. I dug some roots an 'herbs an made a tea for the doctor an' the disease stopped on him. An' then he said, 'give it to de soldiers.' So I biled up a great biler' of roots and herbs, an' de General tailed a man to take two cans an 'go roun' an 'give it to all in de camp dat needed it, and it cured em.'"

¹²⁹ "Tubman History." This probably occurred sometime during 1863, as Tubman was reassigned to Folley Island in late November 1863.

¹³⁰ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 139-140.

¹³¹ White soldiers also received bounties for re-enlisting, whereas black soldiers did not. Rose, Rehearsal. 261-262; see also, Duncan, Where Death. 105-106; T.C. McCaskie, State and Society in Pre-Colonial Asante Society. (Cambridge, 1995). 193-203; McPherson, Struggle. 212-220; Trudeau, Like Men of War. 91-93, 252-255.

¹³² "Letter, Wendell Garrison to William Lloyd Garrison II, June 20, 1864." Garrison Family Papers. 30. f. 852, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, M.A.

¹³³ Franklin Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [1864]," *The Commonwealth*, Boston, August 12, 1864. Sanborn wrote that Tubman had "left Florida to come north in the latter part of June, and went from New York where she landed directly to the home of her aged parents in Auburn, whence she has come to this city."

¹³⁴ Sanborn, "Tubman [1864]."

¹³⁵ Sanborn, "Tubman [1864]."

¹³⁶ Nell Irvin Painter, Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996). 201. See also Earl Conrad, General Harriet Tubman 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1990). 183.

¹³⁷ Painter, Truth. 200-203.

¹³⁸ Rosa Belle Holt, "A Heroine in Ebony," *The Chautauquan*, July, 1896. 462. Holt's article, which relied heavily on Bradford's work, was also based on "three long talks with Harriet Tubman" Holt conducted, one within a month of writing the article. See 461. "I us'd to go see Missus Lincoln but I never wanted to see him [Lincoln]. You see we colored people didn't understand den he was our frien'. All we knew was dat de first colored troops from Massachusetts only got seven dollars a month, while de white regiment got fifteen. We didn't like dat. But now I know all 'bout it, an' I'se sorry I didn't go see Massa Lincoln and tank him."

¹³⁹ Holt, "Heroine." 462.

¹⁴⁰ Holt, "Heroine." 462. "... but he tole her [Truth] he had done nuffin' himself; he was only a servant of de country." Nell Painter shows, however, that the meeting between Truth and Lincoln was not so cordial, in spite of Truth's own description of the meeting. See Painter, Truth. 203-207.

¹⁴¹ Holt, "Heroine." 426.

¹⁴² Rochester Ladies Anti-Slavery Society Records. William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan. Ann Arbor, MI. Entry, "October 28, 1864."

¹⁴³ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 139. Letter, Gerrit Smith, November 22, 1864. Two days later, the wife of General George W. Baird who was also visiting the Smith's in Peterboro, wrote a testimonial for Tubman as well: "Harriet Tubman, a most excellent women, who has rendered faithful and good services to our army, not only in the hospital, but in various capacities, having been employed under Government at Hilton Head, and in Florida; and I commend her to the protection of all officers in whose department she may happen to be. She has been known and esteemed for years by the family of my uncle, Hon. Gerrit Smith, as a person of great rectitude and capabilities. Mrs. Gen A. Baird." P. 138 Tubman may have collected more testimonials and commendations at this time, but these are the only ones that have survived.

¹⁴⁴ "Committee on Teachers," *The Freedmen's Record* Vol. 1, no. 4 April 1865, (1865): 55.

¹⁴⁵ Cheney, "Moses."

¹⁴⁶ Cheney, "Moses."

¹⁴⁷ "Papers." Entry, February 18, 1865.

¹⁴⁸ "Tubman History." Pass, To Brig. General Van Vliet, from Louis H. Pelonge, Asst. Agt. Genl., March 20, 1865, Washington, D.C.

¹⁴⁹ "From Camp Wm. Penn," *The Christian Recorder*, Philadelphia, April 15, 1865.

¹⁵⁰ "Camp William Penn."

¹⁵¹ The U.S. Sanitary Commission had been established in 1861 to provide humanitarian and nursing services and support to the Union Army during the Civil War. "Tubman History." Wood does not identify who the Sanitary Commission workers were.

¹⁵² "Tubman History."

CHAPTER XI

A HEROINE IS REMEMBERED

With the War over, Harriet Tubman's intelligence gathering skills were no longer needed in the Department of the South, leaving her with several choices. Already devoted to nursing wounded and sick soldiers at Fortress Monroe in Virginia, Tubman was also being recruited by the Freedmen's Bureau in South Carolina to teach freedwomen marketable skills. But her aged parents and struggling family back in Auburn and Canada required her attention as well, and the time was approaching when she would need to return there and begin rebuilding a life with them.

Tubman spent several months caring for wounded and dying black soldiers at Fort Monroe. Disturbed by "some dreadful abuses" taking place in the hospital and frustrated by her inability to facilitate positive changes in the conditions at the hospital, Tubman returned to Washington, D.C.¹ There she spoke with Seward, who directed her to Dr. Joseph K. Barnes, Surgeon General, probably informing him of the atrocious fatality rate for African-American soldiers, two and half times greater than for whites, then being treated at the hospital.² Barnes, appointed in August 1864, was instrumental in enforcing reforms in the recruitment of doctors for the army hospitals, and he mandated guidelines for the adequate care of soldiers during the Civil War.³ Barnes officially appointed Tubman "Nurse or Matron at the colored hospital" at Fort Monroe.⁴ Tubman received a pass on July 22, 1865 from Louis H. Pelonge, Assistant Adjutant General to the Secretary

of War, Edwin Stanton, to return to Monroe by way of government transport “free of cost.”⁵

Before leaving Washington, however, Tubman solicited the help of Seward in applying to the government for back pay and a pension. Though still recovering from his nearly fatal wounds received the night of Lincoln’s assassination, and still in mourning over the unexpected death of his wife Frances in June, Seward wrote to Major General David Hunter, requesting that Hunter look into Tubman’s claims against the government. “She believes she has claims for faithful services to the command in South Carolina, with which you are connected, and she thinks that you would be disposed to see her claim justly settled.”⁶ Seward loaned her twelve dollars, to be applied to her already mounting debt.⁷ Less than two weeks later, the New England Freedman’s Aid Society paid twenty dollars, two months of Tubman’s salary, to Seward to apply toward the debt.⁸

Tubman returned to Fort Monroe, though not for long; she was not given the promised appointment and soon returned to Washington.⁹ Her frustration over the lack of payment for her services, either during the war and, possibly, as a nurse in the hospital at Fort Monroe, must have forced her to make a difficult decision: return home and begin earning money to continue to support her parents and pay her debt to Seward, or remain where she was and continue providing valuable, though unpaid, services to wounded black soldiers. No doubt her parents and her crowded household in Auburn were anxious for her return.¹⁰

Whether Tubman ever returned to South Carolina is unknown, but on the first of October, she headed back to Auburn. She stopped by Lucretia Mott’s home, Roadside, outside of Philadelphia, for a short visit and to pay her respects; Lucretia’s daughter,

Elizabeth Mott Cavender, had died one month earlier and the household was still in mourning. Lucretia “was very glad” Tubman stopped by; they talked politics, specifically the “Freedmen & their right to vote.”¹¹ Thomas Mott, Lucretia’s son, stopped by while Tubman was there, giving her five dollars to help her on her way home. Lucretia was impressed by Tubman’s political acumen, noting, “she is a wonderful woman.”¹²

Suffrage and basic civil rights for African Americans dominated political conversations of the day. In January 1865, Congress had passed the 13th amendment to the Constitution, abolishing slavery forever. Section one of Amendment Thirteen states: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”¹³ But this amendment did not guarantee equality, citizenship or the right to vote to African Americans; the Dred Scot decision in 1857 had virtually striped free blacks of their citizenship rights, and a new amendment was needed to guarantee the full protection of citizenship. Discrimination against African Americans, particularly in the South, was rampant, and African Americans could not depend upon equal protection under the existing provisions of the Constitution. In fact, in the South, many states began enacting “Black Codes,” laws specifically targeting blacks everywhere denying them the right to vote, and in many cases restricting rights to own guns or land, to move freely, or to work for themselves. They also included harsh penalties for any breach of these codes, including enforced labor and apprenticeships, prison terms, and punitive levies and taxes.¹⁴

Liberal and moderate Republicans in Congress, therefore, sought to guarantee the civil rights of freedmen by passing a Civil Rights bill in March 1866 guaranteeing citizenship rights. Vetoed by President Andrew Johnson, the bill failed to take effect, but only temporarily. Its key provisions were incorporated into the first clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, which guaranteed citizenship for anyone born in the United States, and forbade states to “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law,” or to “nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”¹⁵ This amendment would become the cornerstone of the plans of the Republican majority in Congress established to rebuild the South after the Civil War. While another amendment would be needed to guarantee the vote for African Americans, the Fourteenth Amendment represented the hope and goals of radicals and moderates in Congress for the rebuilding of a new political, economic and social order in the South.¹⁶

Old prejudices remained, however, and for African Americans, both in the North and the South, bigotry and injustice lingered. In Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and New York, and elsewhere, African Americans faced daily indignities and resistance to their claims to equality in transportation, education, entertainment, and employment. After the war, many such incidents occurred throughout the North; though slavery had ended, rampant discrimination against African Americans persisted. Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth were among many others forcibly removed from trains and streetcars because of the color of their skin, and so was Harriet Tubman.¹⁷

With a “half-fare ticket” in her hand, Tubman took passage on the “11 o’[clock] p.m. train between Camden & South Amboy,” in New Jersey. When the conductor ordered her to the smoking car, she refused. She explained that she was working for the

government and was entitled to ride wherever she liked. "Come, hustle out of here! We don't carry niggers for half-fare," the conductor yelled at her.¹⁸ He physically struggled with her, but Tubman's legendary strength apparently outmatched the conductor.

Clinging tenaciously to some part of the interior of the compartment, Tubman resisted his efforts to forcibly remove her from the train car. He called upon two other men to help; they pried her fingers from their firm grasp upon the car, then wrenched her arm and broke it. She was then thrown violently into the smoking cars, further injuring her shoulder and possibly breaking several of her ribs.¹⁹ No one on the train came to her aid; in fact, several passengers shouted epithets and encouraged the conductor to toss her off the train.²⁰ She told the conductor "he was a copperhead scoundrel, for which he choked her... She told him she didn't thank anybody to call her colored person - She would be called black or Negro - she was as proud of being a black woman as he was of being white."²¹

A young white man approached her when she left the train and suggested she sue the train company. He gave her his card and told her to contact him if she needed a witness, and then he disappeared.²² Tubman made her way to Auburn, arriving at her home physically and emotionally beaten. There, Tubman was slowly nursed back to health by a network of supportive family and friends. Martha Coffin Wright was deeply concerned about Tubman's welfare, physically as well as financially. Wright encouraged her husband, David, to look into the train incident, and they enlisted the aid and support of Wendell Phillips's son-in-law, then working in the American Anti-Slavery Office in New York City, to see if anything could "be got from the Company," the Camden and South Amboy railroad line. David encouraged Tubman to sue; advertisements for the witness

who had given his card to Tubman were placed, calling for him to come forward, and Wright wrote to George Smalley of the *New York Tribune*, possibly to suggest some sort of story when the time was right.²³ The witness never appeared, and though letters from the doctor who treated her in Auburn and Tubman's own testimony may have been sufficient to pursue a lawsuit, it appears that, at least through the winter, nothing came of their efforts to pursue a claim against the railroad company.

When Tubman returned to her home in the fall of 1865, it was to a very crowded household. Ben and Rit were living in the small frame dwelling with Catherine Stewart and her two children, Elijah and Hester, Thomas and Ann Stewart Elliott, who had married in July 1864, Margaret Stewart, Tubman's "niece", and Thornton Newton, a boarder.²⁴ James, Tubman's brother and Catherine's husband, was not in the household, and his whereabouts remain a mystery, though he probably was dead.²⁵ John Stewart had moved out of the house with his new wife, Millie, before 1865, and were then living on the corner of South and Swift Streets in the city of Auburn, just a short walk up South Street from Tubman's home.²⁶

By 1865, several former Maryland runaway slaves had settled in Auburn, some of who had run north with Tubman or who had known her in Maryland and St. Catharines. Bill and Emily Kiah, for instance, who had been part of the famous Dover Eight escape with Thomas Elliott, Denard Hughes and Henry Predeaux in 1857, settled in Auburn under their new names, William and Emily Williams. Their daughter, Mary, who they had to leave behind when they took flight in 1857, probably finally escaped in 1860, when William Still recorded her parents going through his office for a second time.²⁷

Ill and physically exhausted, Tubman needed the support of family and friends in Auburn. Disabled, she could not work throughout the winter, increasing the financial and physical burdens already weighing heavily upon her and her family. She later told William Lloyd Garrison II, when he visited the following April, “they would have suffered for food, the past winter, as she was disabled, if it had not been for the work of a woman in the house - They had to burn their fences for firewood.”²⁸ Catherine was probably this woman; Sarah Bradford later wrote that at one point, perhaps during this period, “everything eatable was exhausted, and the prospect was dark, indeed.”²⁹

Tubman’s mother and father were totally dependent upon her, and she bore the brunt of their “reproaches,” which fell “thick and fast.”³⁰ There was no money for food, according to Bradford, and Tubman’s mother had to go without her tobacco and tea, which “were more essential to her than food or clothing.” One desperate day, when the scoldings and the complaints were particularly harsh, Tubman “went into her closet and shut the door.” She soon emerged, calling to Catherine to “take off that small pot an’ put on a large one.”³¹ Catherine pointed out that they had no food for the pot. “Put on the large pot, Catherine; we’re going to have soup to-day” Tubman told her, and off she went to the market. It was near the end of the day, and Tubman walked from stall to stall; with no money she could buy nothing. Noticing her empty basket, a “kind-hearted butcher” offered her a soup bone and told her she could pay him when she had the money. Other vendors followed suit until “the basket was full.” She traded with other vendors until her basket contained all she needed; meat, potatoes, and vegetables. Bradford quoted Tubman’s rather wry memory of that day, that she “had not ‘gone into her closet and shut the door’ for nothing.”³²

Poverty would mar much of these early years of freedom for Tubman; her household was always full of boarders and people passing through, in addition to assorted friends and relatives seeking temporary or more permanent shelter. Her injuries from the train incident, together with her ongoing struggle with TLE seizures, limited her ability to earn money, forcing her to remain, to some degree, dependent upon white benefactors like the Wrights, the Smiths, the Garrisons, and the Swards. Back pay and a pension for her war service would have gone a long way toward alleviating those financial burdens. Restitution from the railroad company would also have alleviated some of her financial woes, but neither option materialized for her.

Tubman was reluctant to accept charity, although she readily took money when it was offered to her. Wendell Phillips sent her \$60, which “kept them warm for the winter.”³³ After William L. Garrison II’s visit in April, he sent \$10 to Martha Wright for Harriet, telling Wright “his father [William Lloyd Garrison] had a fund of 2 or 300 given him to meet such cases as hers.”³⁴ Later, Tubman told Wright that the money could not “have come in a better time, for she wanted to get some potatoes to plant, but she was afraid Mr. Garrison misunderstood her, & tho’t they were suffering for food, [which] she [said would] not be, while they had so many kind friends here – she has a good deal of that honest pride [which] makes her unwilling to beg.” In spite of her struggles, Wright noted that Tubman “seems happy & exultant, except for ‘the misery’ in her shoulder & chest where that Camden & Amboy wretch hurt her.”³⁵

The Wrights and their friends continued to pursue action against the Railroad Company through the spring. In April, David Wright followed up on the matter in New York with friends at the Anti-Slavery Office, and Martha tried to get more details from

Tubman about which train she had taken and on what day, but to no avail.³⁶ Word was spreading about the incident, however. At the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention in New York City on May 16, 1866, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, a prominent African American writer, lecturer and suffragist, told the audience that she had recently been mistreated on a railroad car coming from Washington to Baltimore, by being forced to sit in the smoking car. She was not the only one, she told them

We have a woman in our country who has received the name of 'Moses,' not by lying about it, but by acting it out (applause)—a woman who has gone down into the Egypt of slavery and brought out hundreds of our people into liberty. The last time I saw that woman, her hands were swollen. That woman who had led one of Montgomery's most successful expeditions, who was brave enough and secretive enough to act as a scout for the American army, had her hands all swollen from a conflict with a brutal conductor, who undertook to eject her from her place. That woman, whose courage and bravery won a recognition from our army and from every black man in the land, is excluded from every thoroughfare of travel.³⁷

Tubman's treatment by the railroad conductor was representative of another battle facing African Americans in general, and black women specifically. The injustices and indignities they were forced to endure provided ample fertile ground for arguments calling for protecting the civil rights of African Americans and ensuring equal protection under the law. Black women were not given the same courtesies and respect white women expected and were accorded in public (and some private) spaces, posing a special and particular burden on black women. Harper highlighted this in her speech, noting that black women's interests differed from white women's, and that winning the vote would not eliminate the discrimination and prejudice confronting the black community daily. Would white women with the vote, Harper asked, help protect the civil rights of black women?³⁸ In closing, Harper challenged the white women in the audience to stand by their black sisters, to look beyond their own white privilege. "You white women speak

here of rights. I speak of wrongs," she reminded them. "Talk of giving women the ballot-box?... While there exists this brutal element in society which tramples upon the feeble and treads down the weak, I tell you that if there is any class of people who need to be lifted out of their airy nothings and selfishness, it is the white women of America."³⁹ For black women, however, the struggle for equal rights and the vote would continue to be an uphill battle well into the twentieth century.

Whether Tubman shared the same sentiments with Harper is not known, but she was probably not in attendance that day; in early April she had gone to Canada to visit family and friends, returning by the middle of the month. It was time to prepare the soil on her small farm for planting; no doubt it became a community effort, as her injuries continued to limit her ability to work. She maintained an open door, taking in boarders to supplement her household income as well as providing shelter for family.

Fanny Seward, William Henry Seward's beloved daughter, died in October 1866. Seward would find her death one of the most difficult trials of his life.⁴⁰ Harriet, according to Bradford, had a premonition that Fanny Seward had died. In a dream, Tubman "saw a chariot in the air, going south, and empty, but soon it returned, and lying in it, cold and stiff, was the body of a young lady of whom Harriet was very fond, whose home was in Auburn, but who had gone to Washington with her father [William H. Seward.]" Terrified by the dream, Tubman ran to Auburn, "to the house of her minister, crying out: 'Oh, Miss Fanny is dead!' and the news had just been received."⁴¹

The needs of Tubman's household were great. In late October, Gerrit Smith's wife, Ann Fitzhugh Smith, sent Harriet a box of clothing, including "some white things" for Rit, "when the time came for her to 'set out for the shining shore' - Harriet said she was

brought up near the Fitz Hughs, and in their part of the country it was customary to prepare the grave clothes & have them ready - Mrs. Smith reminded her in her note of this custom.”⁴² Rit was about eighty years old and was probably in considerably poor health, prompting Ann Smith to send along the “grave” clothes without seeming inconsiderate or impertinent. Martha Wright saw to it that Harriet’s household did not do without for Christmas; her sister, Lucretia Mott, noted that the Motts were doing without presents for each other for Christmas, “after putting up parcels for all the Tubmans around us - some 10 or 12 bundles of very homely yet useful articles, I really have had nothing left for anybody - so we old folks concluded not to try to make presents.”⁴³

It was during this year that John and Kessiah Bowley, who had been living in Chatham, Ontario, Canada, probably came to live with Tubman for a year before returning to the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Harkless Bowley, John and Kessiah’s son, later recalled that he and his family stayed with “Aunt Harriet a year or two before going to Maryland,”⁴⁴ placing the Bowley family there sometime between late 1865 and 1867.⁴⁵ The Bowley family, by then, had expanded to seven children, including James Alfred, Araminta, Linah, Anna, Harkless, Josiah, and Pleasant Ann.⁴⁶ James Alfred, who had stayed in Philadelphia with Tubman when his parents removed to Canada around 1851, had rejoined his family in Canada by 1861. Well educated, James sought employment as a teacher with the Freedmen’s Bureau in Georgetown, South Carolina after the war.⁴⁷ The rest of the family, however, remained in Auburn, and all members apparently chipped in to help support the household; with so many mouths to feed, it was a constant struggle. Tubman’s brother John Stewart “had a fine team of horses,” but was crippled

with “rheumatism” and often could not work.⁴⁸ Ben and Rit were too old to work.⁴⁹

Having extra hands around the house would have eased Tubman’s burden considerably.

John and Kessiah remained at least a year, returning to Dorchester County sometime during late 1867 or early 1868, where they probably moved in with Kessiah’s father, Harkless Jolley.⁵⁰ They left their son, Harkless, behind with Tubman, where he remained for “quite a while,”⁵¹ perhaps because education, a priority in the family, would have been more accessible for a young black child in Auburn than in Dorchester County, or, perhaps, because the situation on the Eastern Shore since emancipation was still quite unstable for black families.⁵²

Maryland had emancipated all of its slaves on November 1, 1864, nearly two years after Lincoln had issued his Emancipation Proclamation freeing all slaves in the Confederate states. Because Maryland had remained loyal to the Union, it was not required by the President to free all of its slaves according the provisions of the Proclamation. Under intense internal and external forces, Maryland finally acquiesced, and wrote a new constitution in November 1864, banning slavery.⁵³ Many former slaveholders, reluctant to adjust to a totally free labor system, indentured the children of their former adult slaves, virtually perpetuating the slave system under the guise of indenture and apprenticeship.⁵⁴ Court records throughout the state, and particularly on the Eastern Shore, show a sharp rise in the incidents of indenture, beginning in the few months before emancipation with free black children, and then newly freed children beginning just hours before November 1, 1864.⁵⁵

The indenturing of Maryland’s black children also insured that the parents would remained tied to the former master, or at the very least in the area, keeping their labor

available to the whites. John and Kessiah may have been leery of putting their son at risk of indenture. In fact, John Stewart's sons, John Henry and Moses Ross, whom Tubman had never been able to bring north, were indentured on November 15, 1864 by their former master, Dr. Anthony Thompson's son-in-law Thomas Haddaway.⁵⁶ Haddaway had purchased Mary Manokey Ross, John Stewart's wife, and their children from Dr. Thompson in March 1857; at the time, John Henry, his brother Moses, and their sister Harriet, were still young children.⁵⁷ By 1864, John and Moses were fourteen and twelve years old, respectively, and their labor was then becoming productive and valuable. For Haddaway, unwilling to lose their potential labor, indenturing them was the quickest and easiest means to maintain the status quo on his farm.

John Stewart "was anxious" to have his boys with him in the North.⁵⁸ Though both John and Mary had hoped to be reunited as a family in the North after he had run away at Christmas time 1854, Tubman had not been successful in effecting Mary and the children's escape. Dr. Thompson, probably fearful that Mary and her children would also take their own freedom like John, sent the family to his daughter's home in Trappe, in Talbot County on the north side of the Choptank River across from Cambridge.⁵⁹ As time went on, Mary fell in love with freeman Wilson Wells, who was then living in the Trappe area.⁶⁰ Though John eventually remarried in the North, he still wanted his children with him. Now that John Henry and Moses were free, however, their indenture to Thomas Haddaway seems to have been the most significant barrier to their traveling North.⁶¹

John Stewart asked John Bowley to find his sons, John Henry and Moses, for him once Bowley resettled in Dorchester County. Sometime during 1867 or 1868, after the

Bowley's had returned to the Eastern Shore, John Bowley "went across the [Choptank] river at night [and] brought away the oldest boy," and secreted him in their home in Dorchester County until John Henry could safely be sent to Auburn.⁶² After "things quieted down," John Bowley returned to the Haddaway plantation, retrieved Moses, and sent him along to Auburn, too.⁶³

John Stewart had not seen his children in thirteen or fourteen years - John Henry and Moses probably had few, if any, memories of their father. While the change must have been difficult, they seemingly adjusted to their new family and community circle. John Henry hired himself out as a laborer, possibly working in the local factories or brickyard. Moses took over the management and driving of his father's team of horses when John Stewart was laid up because of crippling arthritis. Harkless Bowley recalled helping Moses "load the wagon" on occasion.⁶⁴

The winter of 1867-68 was a harsh one, and the family continued to struggle. At one point, Harriet found it necessary to ask for money for herself to buy some food for her family. It had snowed heavily that winter, making it difficult to get into Auburn from her farm on the outskirts of the city; with no money, the situation was desperate. Tubman had no other choice, Bradford wrote, and was "compelled to plunge through the drifts to the city," to seek some help. Arriving at the home of a white benefactor, "Miss Annie," Tubman struggled with the words to convey her problem. Exasperated, "Miss Annie" finally asked, "well, what is it, Harriet?" With her eyes "filled with tears" Tubman asked for a quarter. Through "Miss Annie" Tubman's supporters were notified, and soon Page "supplied all the wants of the family."⁶⁵ On the following Monday, Bradford assured her

doubting white readers, Tubman “appeared with the quarter she had borrowed,” bringing closure to the story with a moral lesson and a clear message about Tubman’s integrity.⁶⁶

In addition to family and friends living in her crowded household, Tubman also took in boarders. One of these boarders was a young Civil War veteran, Nelson Davis. Davis, a member of Company G, 8th United States Colored Infantry Volunteers that fought so valiantly at the Battle of Olustee, Florida, had been honorably discharged on November 10, 1865 at Brownsville, Texas. Originally a slave from Elizabeth City, North Carolina, Davis had fled North sometime during or before 1861. Settling in Oneida County, New York, for a couple of years, Davis went to Pennsylvania and enlisted in the 8th USCT on September 10, 1863 at Camp William Penn outside of Philadelphia.⁶⁷ Nelson Charles, as he was known then, was only twenty-one years old when he was discharged from the army. He followed a fellow soldier, Albert Thompson, from Company G to Auburn, where he found a room at Tubman’s home and a job nearby, probably at a local brickyard, located just to the west and abutting Harriet’s property.⁶⁸

Not too long after Davis had settled into Tubman’s home, she received word that her husband, John Tubman, had been murdered in Dorchester County. On September 30, 1867, John Tubman and a white man named Robert Vincent, a neighbor of Tubman’s, had some sort of disagreement, and Vincent shot Tubman dead. The first news reports indicated that Vincent had threatened to kill John Tubman on the morning of September 30th after a disagreement over “the removal of some ashes from a tenant-house on Vincent’s farm.” Vincent chased Tubman down the road with an ax, though Tubman apparently escaped Vincent’s wrath at that moment. Later in the day, around 5 p.m.,

Vincent and Tubman met again on the road, quarreled, and Vincent shot Tubman in the forehead and killed him.⁶⁹

Violence against freedman continued unabated in the South for years after the war, as whites struggled with a new social order.⁷⁰ For some in the white community, in Maryland as elsewhere, black displays of independence in addition to perceived insolence or disrespect warranted swift and sometimes violent reprisal.⁷¹ Maryland was no different than other parts of the South, and it's white residents struggled to adjust to emancipation and directives imposed by Reconstruction, which tried to control white efforts to re-enslave the freeman through a variety of legal and extra-legal tactics.⁷²

Dorchester County, then, was experiencing the same transformative changes that the rest of the south was experiencing. The exact details of what actually happened the day Tubman was killed, and perhaps the days, months and years leading up to it, between the two men, will probably never be known. As a Baltimore newspaper reported, Vincent never "stopped to see if his shot proved fatal, but continued on his way home."⁷³ The newspaper noted, however, that Vincent was last seen making his way to Bridgeville in Delaware, but that "no effort, that we are aware of, has been made to overtake and bring him to justice."⁷⁴ In fact, though, Vincent was arrested and tried for murder. At the trial, however, Vincent claimed that Tubman had threatened him earlier in the day, and, when he started home later in the day along the same road, Tubman "rushed out of the woods with a club and made at him, whereupon he seized his gun and fired," fatally wounding his alleged attacker.⁷⁵ The State's case against Vincent hinged on the testimony of two African Americans, Rachel Camper, a neighbor, and Tubman's son, Thomas, then thirteen years old. Thomas, who had apparently been with his father at the time of the

shooting, was actually the only one to have witnessed the killing. Baltimore's liberal newspaper, the *Baltimore American*, noted that, "it was universally conceded that he would be acquitted" because only "a colored boy" had witnessed the deed, and that the jury "was composed exclusively of Democrats," meaning former southern sympathizers who were still reluctant to accept African Americans as their equals. Democrats, the paper charged, were still a long way from "convicting a fellow Democrat for killing a Negro. But even that will follow when the Negro is armed with the ballot."⁷⁶ The jury deliberated for ten minutes, whereupon they returned a verdict of "not guilty."⁷⁷

Harriet maintained close contact with friends and relatives on the Eastern Shore, so she probably learned about the shooting quite soon after it occurred. She had been deeply wounded by her husband's infidelity, but she remained committed to their marriage vows. No documentation exists to show that she went to the trial of his killer.⁷⁸

That fall, however, Tubman had other pressing matters to occupy her attention. She was still pursuing her claim against the government for back pay as a scout and nurse for the Union Army. In early November, she visited Gerrit Smith to solicit support for her efforts; Sallie Holley, a writer, former abolitionist, and suffragist, was there, and Tubman showed her the documents she had been collecting for two years to support her claim. Holley immediately posted a letter to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, highlighting Tubman's struggles with the government and her injuries from the train incident two years earlier.⁷⁹ Expecting her readers to know Tubman's history, either through personal appearances or through the anti-slavery press, Holley asked "among American women, who has shown a courage and self-devotion to the welfare of others equal to Harriet? Hear her story of going down to rescue her suffering people, bringing them off through

perils and dangers enough to appall the stoutest heart, till she is known among men as ‘Moses.’” Then, for unexplained reasons, she added, “forty thousand dollars was not too great a reward for the Maryland slaveholders to offer for her,”⁸⁰ thus setting in print an exaggerated myth that still persists today. Holley may have been trying to make the point that if the Maryland slaveholders found her so valuable, why couldn’t the federal government find value in her services to the Union during the war?

Gerrit Smith gave Tubman money that day, and perhaps sent Harriet along to other friends and supporters who were still inclined to help her.⁸¹ She needed it. “She has parents and stray children to support,” Martha Coffin Wright wrote to her son William, “Eliza [Wright Osborne] does a good deal for her, & I have given her a good deal of clothing etc ---- I think the Wises are kind to her, & Mr. [Charles P.] Wood and Emma & the Townsends.” The Garrisons continued to send her funds; William Lloyd Garrison II had married Martha Coffin Wright’s daughter, Ellen, bringing the Garrison family in Boston in closer contact with the daily needs and wants of Tubman and her family.⁸² Tubman’s constant economic battle plagued her a good portion of her post-war life, as would her battle for recognition from the government for wartime services. But that fall, and into the winter of 1867-68, Tubman continued to need the support of her white benefactors, not only for personal survival, but also to support her efforts to raise money to provide for the destitute and poor who found their way to her door in Auburn.

The plight and struggles of the freedmen in the South for economic, educational and political advancement occupied Tubman’s thoughts as well. Tubman’s nephew, James A. Bowley had been working with the Freedmen’s Bureau in South Carolina, and perhaps that, with her connections to the Bureau itself, provided Tubman the impetus to raise

funds for the freedmen's relief effort. In May of 1867, Tubman organized a small fair to raise money; modeled on the old Anti-Slavery Fairs from before the war, local donations of clothing, household and personal items, as well as home baked goods were sold, all for the benefit of the southern freedmen.⁸³

By the following, January 1868, Tubman was preparing for another Freedmen's fair.⁸⁴ She solicited the help of a significant number of the Wrights' friends and fellow liberal activists, including the daughters of Auburn's social and liberal elite, such as Ann Wise, Emily Hopkins, and Eliza Wright Osborne. They formed committees and started organizing the fair with Tubman.⁸⁵ An article appeared in the *Auburn Daily* newspaper, featuring Tubman's activities on the Underground Railroad "hiding in the woods days, & traveling nights," and also her service "as a scout, during the War, & as a nurse," using the opportunity to draw attention to her humanitarian work.⁸⁶

The Fair was held at the Central Presbyterian Church, where Tubman and her family had been attending services since its inception in 1862.⁸⁷ The women made dolls and doll clothes, "baby wrappers", aprons, and other assorted articles, and contributions of food, were sold or auctioned. "Munson [Osborne] and Mr. Merriman [bought] several things, ham, cakes, etc., & presented them to Harriet Tubman," Martha Coffin Wright told her son William.⁸⁸ Some of the younger helpers set up an "Art Gallery," which featured a zany collection of tongue in cheek collections of paintings, including "Fishes in oil by S. Ardine," and "Mices home by D. airy Maide," (a piece of cheese). According to Martha Wright, "almost everybody went there to lunch & supper." The event successfully raised over \$400.⁸⁹

During the spring of 1868, Sarah H. Bradford, the sister of Central Presbyterian's founding pastor, Samuel M. Hopkins, Jr., was persuaded to write a biography of Tubman. Bradford had earned a small degree of success as a writer of sentimental novels and short stories. Most featured such moralistic topics as overindulgent parents and the naughty children who "owe their origin to the criminal neglect of proper parental discipline," dead mothers and orphaned children, impoverished widows and at least one story of a fugitive slave, "Nina."⁹⁰ Writing under the pseudonym "Cousin Cicely," Bradford published seven volumes of short stories, including several for young readers, one novel, two biographies, and a fictionalized history of the Linton Family, before starting her book on Tubman.⁹¹ Though Bradford was probably anti-slavery in her sentiments, she was not known as an active abolitionist, and she seemingly was not well known to the Wrights and Osbornes, Tubman's closest white friends in Auburn.⁹² But Bradford's father, Samuel Miles Hopkins, was a successful lawyer, judge, and former New York congressman who had been friends with William H. Seward. Her brother, Prof. Samuel M. Hopkins, Jr., was a minister and professor of Ecclesiastical History at the Auburn Theological Seminary.⁹³ Sarah married John M. Bradford, a local lawyer and businessman, and they raised their six children in Geneva, New York, to the west of Auburn.⁹⁴

During the late spring and into the summer of 1868, Bradford contacted several of Tubman's associates, many of whom she did not know, asking them to provide testimonials and reminiscences of Tubman and her activities.⁹⁵ Lucretia Mott, Franklin Sanborn, Gerrit Smith, Thomas Garrett, Wendell Phillips, Frederick Douglass, Rev. Henry Fowler, and Tubman's nephew, James A. Bowley, were among the notables who

provided information and letters of support.⁹⁶ Recognizing, perhaps, white readers' demands for authenticity; Bradford printed many of the letters written to her in support of Tubman's life work in Scenes. Frederick Douglass's letter, perhaps the most poetic in form, claims such truth for Tubman, writing,

You ask for what you do not need when you call upon me for a word of commendation. I need such words from you far more than you can need them from me, especially where your superior labors and devotion to the cause of the lately enslaved of our land are known as I know them... Much that you have done would seem improbable to those who do not know you as I know you. It is to me a great pleasure and a great privilege to bear testimony to your character and your works, and to say to those to whom you may come, that I regard you in every way truthful and trustworthy.⁹⁷

Why Bradford was chosen to write Tubman's biography is unknown; at least one other potential author, Rev. Henry Fowler may have been considered for the job, but ill health prevented him from accepting the task.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the task fell to Bradford, who was ultimately a poor choice.⁹⁹ Complicating matters was Bradford's upcoming plans to sail for Europe on September 2, 1868, leaving just three or four months to write the biography of Harriet Tubman.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Bradford's brother, Samuel M. Hopkins, wrote in the introduction to the book, that Bradford made "no claim whatever to literary merit. Her hope was merely that the considerably numerous public already in part acquainted with Harriet's story, would furnish purchasers enough to secure a little fund for the relief of this remarkable woman." It seems surprising that Bradford had no hopes for a wide circulation of the biography, especially given the success of many former slave narratives, which were still popular in the early post bellum period. At any rate, according to Hopkins, Bradford felt that "outside that circle [numerous public] she did not suppose the memoir was likely to meet with much if any sale."¹⁰¹ It seems, then, that Tubman's biography was doomed from the start.

Writing in haste, taking just three to four months between taking up the task and sailing to Europe, Bradford hoped “the bare, unadorned facts are enough to stir the hearts of the friends of humanity, the friends of liberty, the lovers of their country” to purchase the book.¹⁰² Bradford explained that she printed only stories told to her by Tubman if they could be independently verified by another source.¹⁰³ Tubman spent some time living with Bradford, giving her the opportunity to record Tubman’s many stories. “Much has been left out which would have been highly interesting,” Bradford wrote in her preface to Scenes, “because of the impossibility of substantiating by the testimony of others the truth of Harriet’s statements. But whenever it has been possible to find those who were cognizant with the facts stated, they have been corroborated in every particular.”¹⁰⁴ Unfortunately, if Bradford had accepted more of Tubman’s stories on their own merit, we might have a richer account of her life.

In the end, Bradford’s volume was a weak and imperfect memoir. As historian Jean Humez has argued, Bradford was not a “competent transcriber” of Tubman’s oral stories, “apparently because of unfamiliarity with her cultural norms.”¹⁰⁵ As a white woman, of the time and class, Bradford was more suited to sentimental dramatization than the to recording and conveying the intricacies of the life of a black woman whose life under slavery and in a highly racialized society was beyond her understanding. Tubman’s version of her life was probably highly modified and censored, revealing not only Tubman’s voice, but also her voice according to Sarah Bradford.¹⁰⁶ Bradford’s claims of accuracy and the pursuit of truth only served to reveal her as an interloper in Tubman’s story, an omnipresent and all knowing narrator whose white prejudices mistakenly informed her judgment. Bradford may have been more concerned with her own

reputation than with writing Tubman's memoir. Harriet's life had all the elements of a dramatic novel, and Bradford needed only to record her story more deliberately, rather than dramatizing elements of her story for the sake of sentimentality.

Of the one-hundred and thirty two pages in the biography, fewer than half were written by Bradford; the rest includes about twenty pages of letters of support and testimonials from friends and acquaintances, including several from Union Army officers familiar with Tubman's war service; a copy of Sanborn's 1863 *Commonwealth* article; newspaper articles and a letter relating to Charles Nalle's rescue by Tubman in Troy, N.Y. in 1860; an introduction by Samuel Miles Hopkins, Bradford's brother; and a sixteen page "Essay on Woman-Whipping" (whose authorship is under question), and a list of subscribers who donated funds to pay for the printing of the book.¹⁰⁷

While Franklin Sanborn's *Commonwealth* article remains a vitally important biographical sketch of Tubman, and its placement in the book has helped preserve the information, Bradford's interviews with Tubman, and the resulting narrative through Bradford's hand, are still perhaps the most important link to Tubman's history, in spite of Bradford's inaccuracies. Bradford was the first to disclose more important details of Tubman's youth, revealing important names and information and providing additional clues to Tubman's past. Bradford offered several new stories, too, including the escape of Joe Bailey, and his brother William, Peter Pennington and Eliza Manoke; the "rescue" of Tubman's aged parents in 1857; the dramatic mission to bring her brothers away; her Civil War activities; and more detail on Tubman's own escape and other escapes she was involved in. These new details are important pieces of Tubman's

narrative, which have remained part of Tubman's identity to the public for more than one hundred years.

Fortunately, what was recorded by Bradford, even when misleading or inaccurate, is the foundation from which historian can embark on a path to research and further discovery. As an historical document, rather than just a literary production, it performs a great service; compelled by expectations (by the white community) of veracity, Bradford eagerly provided it. The testimonials, letters of reference, and commendations offered proof to the reader of Tubman's (and Bradford's own) respectability and truthfulness. It not only supported the validity of the stories, but also confirmed Tubman's right to reveal her narrative to the public. Through her narrative, Tubman offered her life as representative of the horrors of slavery, and also staked a claim, based on an African American intellectual and spiritual tradition to full participation in the public discourse about the still-uncertain fate of millions of ex-slaves.

Tubman's narrative in Scenes challenged conventional stereotypes of black womanhood. To be sure, in its twin themes of resistance and liberation, it followed conventions that a predominantly white audience had come to expect and understand from black memoirs. Yet, more than this, Scenes recounts an experience both very personal and collective, of resistance and liberation. Tubman's intense spirituality and humor drove a compelling drama for a public still eager to read lurid details of slavery and its injustices. Tubman told a tale of a physical and spiritual struggle against violence and oppression that sapped the very lifeblood from her community and family, but it also conveyed a message of ultimate justice, a message that resonated with a northern liberal public still celebrating its victory over the South and slavery.

Nevertheless, *Scenes* is still a mediated text, and we may never know the true extent of Bradford's intrusion into the narrative, nor will we ever know some of the stories Tubman may have told Bradford that did not find their way into print. Certainly there were errors, and several people were concerned that they be corrected. William G. Wise, for example, wrote to William J. Moses, the local Auburn publisher, that he expected future corrections. "I have not been able to examine the book," Wise wrote, "but as you wish the bill paid to-day, I send a check, relying on you to correct afterwards any errors there may be."¹⁰⁸ Ellen Wright Garrison wrote to her mother, Martha Wright, that the imperfections irritated her. "I don't think much of Mrs. Thingumbob's [Bradford's] effort," Garrison wrote, "she is continually apologizing for haste, & going off to Europe. If she hadn't time to do the subject justice, why undertake it? ... Still it is an interesting account of marvelous things, & I only wish it could have been better worked up."¹⁰⁹

Perhaps Bradford's tight schedule did not allow for corrections to the narrative before she sailed, but many of the mistakes found throughout the book were not corrected. Clearly, Bradford did not understand who exactly owned Tubman and her family in slavery. For instance, she conflated the identities and roles of Anthony Thompson, Dr. Anthony C. Thompson and Edward Brodess (whom she never identifies) as guardian, master, and owner, three distinct and important relationships in Tubman's life. Bradford mistakenly believed that Dr. Thompson owned Harriet's family, and also erroneously believed that Edward Brodess was a child when he died, leaving his guardian (Dr. Thompson, in error again) in charge of Harriet and her family. However, even Tubman's closest friends recognized the difficult task assigned to Bradford, "A Mrs. Bradford of Geneva," Martha Coffin Wright wrote to her sisters in July 1868, "is writing

a memoir of her - as well as she can, with Harriet's disjointed materials."¹¹⁰ Martha Wright believed that Lydia Maria Child would have made the narrative more interesting, but she felt Bradford deserved "credit for having done so well, almost impossible as it is to understand Harriet's desultory talk."¹¹¹

As an afterthought to the core narrative, Bradford or her publisher included the "Essay on Woman-Whipping," a daring and harsh indictment of the legacy of slavery on white southerners, its corrupting influence on male/female relationships and its legacy of simmering racial animosities, condemned a culture that practiced the whipping of other human beings. The author, and we are not sure that Bradford wrote it, describes whipping as a "dish of torture... to be peppered very high to please the palates of those epicures in brutality." How, she asked, could "the 'chivalric' mind endure the loss of such gratifications?" "But," she continued, "the bloody morsel has been snatched from the mouths of the 'chivalry' at one clutch. No wonder their mortification veats itself in weeping and wailing, and knashing of teeth, and in such miscellaneous atrocities as their 'Ku-Klux- Klan' can venture to inflict on helpless freedmen and radicals."¹¹² The author reserves some of her harshest criticism for Southern women. "A good many women, North as well as South, manifest a tendency to become tyrants in their own households, and love to bully their servants. But,

The Southern mistress was a domestic devil with horns and claws; selfish, insolent, accustomed to be waited on for everything. She grew up with the instinct of tyranny - to punish violently the least neglect or disobedience in her servants. The variable temper of girlhood, not ugly unless thwarted, became in the "Southern matron" a chronic fury... It is the vindictive woman's nature in the South that protracted and gave added ferocity to

the rebellion. These woman-whipping wives and mothers it was who hounded on the masculine chivalry to the work of exterminating the “accused Yankees,” and thus made their own punishment so much sorer than it need have been.¹¹³

The author felt hopeful, however, that white southerners would learn to assert “gentler virtues” under the influence of morally superior northerners. This essay, even though it seems to have little to do with Tubman’s narrative per se (although Tubman bore the scars of being whipped), is a reflection, as well, of the mood of some former anti-slavery activists, who were still willing and able to heap harsh criticism on those social and cultural norms that the Radical Reconstructionists identified with the South and were trying so hard to change. In 1868, rampant injustices and daily acts of violence continued on a daily basis in the South, and this essay was a reminder that some Northerners were determined, then anyway, to revolutionize a repressive southern culture that denied African Americans social, political and economic opportunities.

We do not know how Tubman herself felt about the book. Whatever reservations she may have harbored, she knew sales would generate money for her and her family, releasing her from a large debt that could not have been paid any other way. She must have felt some pride; she would join the ranks of other former slaves who had published their memoirs, with or without the help of an amanuensis. Though written and edited by a white woman, Bradford’s *Scenes* contributed to a growing body of African American literature that was struggling to maintain the memory of slavery and the war, and to reveal a history of African American family, community and spiritual life that was becoming lost to view in the oppressive waves of discrimination that were consuming the nation in the post war years. Despite the book’s limitations, by preserving one woman’s

image of slavery and her the struggle for freedom and equality, Harriet's narrative emerged as a vivid, though limited, view of the struggles of African Americans to create an historical memory. In doing so, it shared the collective production of an African American literature that emerged through the abolition and antislavery movements of the nineteenth century, and served to promote political as well as personal agendas. This narrative, though mediated through a white lens, reveals that Tubman embraced the written word as a means to further her goals of liberty and economic independence, not only for herself, but for other freemen, too. Through this medium of the written word, she was able to establish a permanent record of her history, though she may have never imagined just how permanent her legacy would be and how important her historical memory would become.

The publication of Tubman's narrative became an important vehicle through which she could repay many of her debts. She still owed William H. Seward over \$1200 for her home. To ensure that Tubman received the greatest benefit from the sales of the book, Bradford agreed to forgo any royalties, and donors were sought to underwrite the cost of publishing the book with William J. Moses. Sometime during the summer and fall of 1868, William G. Wise, a local Auburn businessman, organized a subscription drive "for the benefit of Harriet Tubman," raising over \$430 to cover the costs of printing. "The case of this remarkable & woman," Wise wrote,

is known to many citizens of Auburn and other places. Various plans for her relief having been proposed and failed, Mrs. Sarah H. Bradford of Geneva has written a memoir of Harriet, including her early history, her escape from slavery, and her extraordinary achievements in rescuing others, which it is proposed to publish in a neat 12 inch volume of less than 150 pages, with a likeness of Harriet in her costume of a union scout prefixed. The cost of 1000 copies stenotyped will be about \$350.00. The following subscription is

designed to meet that expense, so that the entire proceeds of the sale of the work may accrue to Harriet's benefit.¹¹⁴

With the book ready for that fall, Tubman turned her attention to organizing another fair for the relief of the freedmen in South Carolina. James A. Bowley arrived in early September for a visit, spending time with Harriet, his younger brother Harkless and other family and friends, where he met some of Tubman's old anti-slavery friends. "Harriet Tubman just came with her mother's great grandson," Martha Wright wrote to her nieces Anna and Patty, "he lived in Canada till the War, & now teaches the freemen in S. Carolina - He was one of the first that Harriet rescued from Slavery."¹¹⁵ Martha Wright, though, seemed to be tiring of the endless rounds of fundraising and relief efforts for the freedmen, noting that she had "to look around & find a bundle of blamed things for the nephew to take to the Freedmen - & get it to Eliza's."¹¹⁶ Bradford noted that, "even now, while friends are trying to raise the means to publish this little book for her, she is going around with the greatest zeal and interest to raise a subscription for her Freedmen's Fair."¹¹⁷ Seward, obviously frustrated with Tubman's perpetual needs for money, told Tubman, "you have worked for others long enough. It is time you should think of yourself. If you ask for a donation for *yourself*, I will give it to you; but I will not help you to rob yourself for others."¹¹⁸

Within the month, however, Martha Wright was writing in a more positive tone to her sisters about the current activities in support of the freedmen and Tubman's upcoming fair. Tubman had just stopped by for a visit, and she asked Martha to thank Lucretia for her for sending a testimonial letter to be inserted in her memoir, and for the \$5.00 for her use. Martha was "busy making" or aprons, some of which were to be sold at Tubman's fair in December. Harriet had collected a full box of clothing and was looking

for more for the freedmen. "I couldn't think for a moment, what there was left, but I told her she needn't come all the way here for the bundle, I [would] send it to Mrs.

Osborne's."¹¹⁹ The Osborne's home was on South Street, much closer to Tubman's home than the Wright's residence on Genesee Street, making it more convenient for Tubman to pick up items from there. Tubman, however, must have told other people to send their donations to the Osbornes, and before they knew it, an advertisement appeared in the *Auburn Daily* announcing that all items for the freedmen could be left at the Osborne home on South Street. "Bundles began to pile in," crowding Eliza Wright Osborne's "little sewing room."¹²⁰

The Wrights, the Motts, the Osbornes, the Wises, the Dennises, and many other friends spent October and November making items to sell at Tubman's fair. Martha Wright made "38 aprons 9 bags - lap bags for children, & rag bags - 8 knitting needle elastics - 3 tomatoes (pincushions) & one needle book." Eliza Wright Osborne contributed potholders, rag dolls and towels, and several young women made an "elaborately ornamented" fruit cake which was raffled off though twenty-five tickets. Others contributed "fancy things [which] sold well," flowers, and other assorted items.¹²¹ Henry Wise persuaded William J. Moses to print *Scenes* in time to sell copies at the fair – which may account for some of the typographical errors.¹²² Sixty or seventy copies were sold at a dollar each, and Martha Wright noted that in all the excitement of the fair, "Harriet was quite the heroine... her talk... was as good as a play."¹²³ Though Martha complained that things were marked too high, even the book at one dollar, the fair successfully raised over \$500 for Tubman's relief effort.¹²⁴

Over the next few months, the same circle of supporters ordered copies of the book to give or sell to friends, or to sell at Anti-Slavery Meetings and other gatherings of former abolitionists and activists.¹²⁵ An unidentified buyer in Chicago purchased one hundred copies.¹²⁶ Franklin Sanborn wrote a lengthy review of the book for the *Springfield Republican*, encouraging people to buy it for the benefit of Tubman and “her protégés.”¹²⁷ Harriet was “poor and partially disabled from her injuries,” Sanborn told his readers, “yet she supports cheerfully and uncomplainingly herself and her aged parents, and always has several poor children in her house, who are entirely dependent upon her exertions.” Three of these children, Sanborn noted, were then living with Tubman, “while their parents are working to pay back money borrowed to bring them on.”¹²⁸ As if this was not enough, Sanborn informed his readers that she “maintains, by her exertions... two schools of freedmen in the South, providing them teachers and sending them clothes and books. She never asks for anything herself, but she does ask the charity of the public for ‘her people.’”¹²⁹ By the end of January 1869, 594 copies of *Scenes* had been sold, with another 607 copies sold over the following three months.¹³⁰

It would seem then, that Tubman’s financial worries were at least temporarily over. Though the debt on her home was not paid off until 1873, the funds raised from the sale of the book brought some immediate relief to Tubman and her family.¹³¹ She was also still receiving small amounts of money from white supporters, and also became the beneficiary of a small inheritance from Mrs. [Laura?] Birney in the form of a \$50 annuity.¹³² Tubman’s persistent efforts to alleviate the sufferings of her family and the struggling freedmen in the south represented a continuum of humanitarian work that would define the remainder of her life. Not every day would be a struggle for her, not

every day would bring hunger to her household, but her fight for justice and equality would remain a singular focus for the next four decades.

CHAPTER ELEVEN NOTES

¹ "Manuscript History Concerning the Pension Claim of Harriet Tubman." HR 55A-D1 Papers Accompanying the Claim of Harriet Tubman. Record Group 233. National Archives. Washington, D.C. Frustrated by these abuses, Tubman had a friend write a letter to the *New York Independent*, claiming that twenty to twenty-five black soldiers were dying per day in Hampton Hospital at Fort Monroe. This claim was denied by H.B. White, Executive Officer in charge of the hospital, in a letter to the *Independent*, stating that the total number of deaths for the month of June was "Whites, twenty-six, (26); Colored, seventy, (70); total, ninety-six, (96)," or three per day. Irregardless of the claims, it is clear by the numbers that black soldiers were dying at a rate of 2.5 times greater than white soldiers, leaving us to wonder what sort of treatment the black soldiers were actually receiving. See, "Hampton Hospital. Harriet Tubman's Statements Contradicted," *New York Independent*, New York, August 3, 1865. I am indebted to Jay Meredith for finding this article.

² "Hampton."

³ Margaret E. Wagner, Gary W. Gallagher, and Paul Finkleman, ed., The Library of Congress Civil War Desk Reference (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002). 654.

⁴ "Tubman History." ; and Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 70. In Wood's manuscript, the words "nurse" and "matron" are capitalized, whereas in the Bradford work they are not. I am following Wood's transcription here, as he was working with original documents, and it is not clear whether Bradford also copied from original documents or used a copy of Wood's manuscript (he made several.)

⁵ "Tubman History." ; and Bradford, Scenes. 70.

⁶ "Tubman History." Letter, Seward to Hunter, July 25, 1865; and Bradford, Scenes. 65.

⁷ "Microfilm Reels 192-193." Seward Papers. Harvard University. Cambridge.. Debit entry, July 31, 1865; see also, Rebecca Green. "History of Harriet Tubman and Her Brick House," Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: 1998.

⁸ "Papers." Credit entry, August 9, 1865. ; see also Green. "Tubman Home," Curiously, Hannah E. Stevenson, Secretary Commission on Teachers of the New England Freedman's Aid Society, wrote to Frances Seward on November 7, 1865, that they had not sent money to her since April. "Will you have the kindness to [write] me if you know anything of Harriet Tubman? It has been a long time since we have heard from her, & she has received no money since last April." See Jean Humez, Harriet Tubman: The Life and Life Stories. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003). Letter, Hannah E.

Stevenson, to Mrs. [Frances Miller] Seward, November 7, 1865. Original in Harriet Tubman Home Museum, Auburn, NY.

⁹ "Tubman History."

¹⁰ "Tubman History."

¹¹ "Letter, Lucretia Coffin Mott to Martha Coffin Wright, October 2, 1865." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

¹² "Letter, L.C.Mott to M.C.Wright, Oct. 2, 1865."

¹³ Linda R. Monk, The Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution. (New York: Hyperion, 2003). 205. The amendment was passed in January 1865, but was not ratified until December 1865.

¹⁴ Eric Foner, The Story of American Freedom. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998); Monk, Words. (; and Eric Foner, Reconstruction: Americas Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988). 66-67, 199-207.

¹⁵ Monk, Words. (Pp. 213-215.; and Foner, Reconstruction. 251-261.

¹⁶ Foner, Reconstruction. 251-261.

¹⁷ Nell Irvin Painter, Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996). 209-211. See also, William S. McFeeley, Frederick Douglass. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991). 92-93

¹⁸ Bradford, Scenes. 46.

¹⁹ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Mariana Pelham, November 7, 1865." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, Massachusetts.. "She told him she didn't thank anybody to call her cullud pusson." Bradford says she was thrown into the baggage car. Bradford, Scenes. (p. 46.

²⁰ Bradford, Scenes. (p. 46.

²¹ "M.C.Wright to Marianna P. Wright, Nov. 7, 1865." Martha Coffin Wright wrote this remarkable passage just after she had just received a visit from Tubman, who told Wright in detail what had happened to her on the train. The immediacy of Wright's description is far more moving than Bradford's account, written three years later. The powerful commentary by Tubman of her own sense of pride in her identity as a "black woman" and her impressions of the conductor's political affinity, casts an interesting light on contemporary racial and social politics. During and after the Civil War, Northern sympathizers of the South were called "copperheads," by Unionists. Originally a term of

derision used by Republicans against anti-war Democrats, during and after the Civil War it also came to symbolize the more conservative wings of the Democratic party. See James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988). 494.

²² Bradford, Scenes. 46-47. See also, "M.C. Wright to Marianna P. Wright, Nov. 7, 1865."

²³ "M.C. Wright to Marianna P. Wright, Nov. 7, 1865." According to Bradford, "the card the young man had given her was only a visiting card, and she did not know where to find him." Bradford, Scenes. 47.

²⁴ 1865 Cayuga County, New York, Town of Fleming Census.

²⁵ According to Frank Sanborn in his *Commonwealth* article written in 1863, Tubman "had ten brothers and sisters, of whom three are now living, all at the North." The census record indicates that Rit was the mother of nine children, which have been accounted for in previous chapters. If three were still living, to the best of Tubman's knowledge at the time, at least two of them were John and William Henry. If James was still alive in 1863, then he could have been the third living sibling, but he probably was dead by the time the census was taken in 1865, when Catherine is listed as "single." Sarah Bradford wrote in 1868 that Catherine's husband had died in Canada (though she erroneously identified him as William Henry.) See Bradford, Scenes. 63-64. Tubman's brother Moses, who ran away soon after Tubman did, has never been located. Rachel died in 1859. Because Tubman did not know where her older sisters were, she may have assumed that they had died after they were sold away from Maryland decades before. Thornton Newton was from Virginia, and was probably a former soldier who had known Tubman during the war. Margaret Stewart, though she lived with the Swards and Wordens, was probably temporarily staying at Tubman's home because the Seward's were in Washington, where William was recuperating from his attack, and mourning the death of Frances Seward, William's wife. Lazette Worden, Frances Seward's sister, was probably in Washington at this time, helping run the Seward's household after the death of her sister, and helping to care for William.

²⁶ See Andrew Boyd, Boyd's Auburn Directory, 1865-66. (Auburn, N.Y.: Andrew Boyd Publisher, 1865). 183.

²⁷ It should be recalled that Bill and Emily Kiah (Chion) ran away with the Dover Eight in March 1857. It appears that they stayed in the area while awaiting an opportunity to rescue their daughter, who was 9 years old at the time and still enslaved. See William Still, The Underground Railroad. (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., rpt. edition 1970). 543.

²⁸ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to David Wright, April 2, 1866." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

²⁹ Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: J.J. Little & Co., 1901). 143.

³⁰ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. 144.

³¹ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. 144.

³² Bradford, Harriet, 1901. 145.

³³ Sallie Holley, "Letter from Sallie Holley.," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Washington, D.C., Nov. 30, 1867.

³⁴ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Lucretia Coffin Mott, April 19, 1866." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

³⁵ "Letter, M.C. Wright to L.C. Mott, April 16, 1866." Sarah Bradford also noted this reluctance to beg, even in times of greatest need. "Harriet's extreme delicacy in asking anything for herself," stood in sharp contrast to her willingness to ask for money to help support others.

³⁶ Several letters written between Martha and David Wright, and also between Martha and members of her family during April 1866 reveal concerted efforts on the part of the Wrights and others to force a settlement of sorts from the railroad. Martha had trouble tracking Tubman down to get the details – she had gone to Canada after William L. Garrison II's visit the first of April – and David Wright seemed unable to effect any sort of legal action against the company. See letter to and from Martha Coffin Wright, month of April, 1866, Garrison Family Papers, SSCSC, Northampton, MA. William Lloyd Garrison told his daughter-in-law, Ellen Wright Garrison, "that Conductor should be made to support her all her life," which Ellen agreed "would be poetical justice indeed." "Letter, Ellen Wright Garrison to Martha Coffin Wright, April 26, 1866." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

³⁷ Philip S. Foner, and Robert James Branham, ed., Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787-1900 (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998). 458-460. Frances Ellen Watkins Harper speech "We Are All Bound Up Together," from the Eleventh National Women's Rights Convention. At this convention, the first of its kind held after the end of the Civil War, the American Equal Rights Association was founded. After Harper's speech, the first Equal Rights Amendment, was presented to the conference. See also, Shirley Wilson Logan, "We Are Coming": The Persuasive Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Black Women. (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999). 57-58.

³⁸ Logan, We Are Coming. 58-59.

³⁹ Foner, ed., Lift Every Voice. 460.

⁴⁰ Daniel W. Crofts, *Seward, William Henry*. (American Council of Learned Societies, 2000 [cited]; available from <http://www.anb.org/>).

⁴¹ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. (The minister was probably Rev. Henry Fowler, of Central Presbyterian Church in Auburn.

⁴² "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, November 1, 1866." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College,. Northampton, MA.

⁴³ "Letter, Lucretia Coffin Mott to Martha Coffin Wright, January 1, 1867." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁴⁴ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Reel 1, Box 3 folder d2. NYPL - Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. New York.. Letter, Bowley to Conrad, January 4, 1839.

⁴⁵ According to the 1870 U.S. Census, Dorchester County Maryland, John and Kessiah Bowley had been in Maryland at least two years. Their youngest son, John R. Bowley, was two years old and was listed as born in Maryland.

⁴⁶ 1861, Chatham, Ontario, Canada Census.

⁴⁷ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Anna and Patty Lord, September 11, 1868." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College,. Northampton, MA..

⁴⁸ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Letter, Bowley to Conrad, Aug. 24, 1939.

⁴⁹ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Letter, Bowley to Conrad, Jan. 4, 1939. Harkless remembered vividly, however, his great grandparents, Benjamin and Ritty Ross, particularly "Grandfather... walking the floor praising the Lord."

⁵⁰ See Bureau of the Census. United States Federal Census, 1870., Dorchester County, MD.

⁵¹ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Letter, Bowley to Conrad, August 8, 1939.

⁵² Richard Paul Fuke, Imperfect Equality: African Americans and the Confines of White Racial Attitudes in Post-Emancipation Maryland. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999). The transition from slavery to freedom had been difficult for blacks and whites, though blacks experienced a multitude of discriminatory and illegal practices, including violence, aimed at maintaining control over black advancement economically, politically, and socially. 69-83, 88-106, and 195-212.

⁵³ Robert J. Brugger, Maryland, a Middle Temperment, 1634-1980. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988). Pp. 302-310. Barbara Jeanne Fields, Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). Pp. 124-132.

⁵⁴ Indenture laws had long been on the books for the binding of whites and free blacks. In 1839, however, Orphan's Courts were empowered to bind any free black child whose parents were deemed unfit to care for them. For a discussion of the phenomenon of indenturing and apprenticing black children in Maryland, see Fuke, Imperfect. (Particularly Chapter 4; Jeffrey R. Brackett, The Negro in Maryland. A Study of the Institution of Slavery. (1889; Reprint, 1969). New York: Negro Universities Press, 1889). 218-224. Fields, Slavery. 137-142.; and Anita Aidt Guy, Maryland's Persistent Pursuit to End Slavery, 1850-1864. (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997). 442-447.; and Fields, Slavery. 137-142.

⁵⁵ See Fields, Slavery. 137-142.

⁵⁶ Talbot County Indenture Records, Talbot County Orphans Court, November 15, 1864. See also, R.B. Leonard, Bound to Serve: The Indentured Children of Talbot County, 1794-1920.

⁵⁷ Dorchester County Court, Chattel Records. (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives. "Anthony C. Thompson to Sarah Catherine Haddaway, March 16, 1857." John Henry was 7, Moses was 4, Harriet, or "Ritty" was 3 years old in March 1857. Mary Ross had by this time had given birth to another child, possibly the child of Wilson Wells, with whom she later married and had more children. Thompson had probably sent Mary and her children to the live and work on the Haddaway's farm in 1855 or 1856, before formally selling them to his daughter, Sarah in 1857.

⁵⁸ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Letter, Bowley to Conrad, August 24, 1839.

⁵⁹ On May 12, 1856, Dr. Anthony C. Thompson reduced Mary Manoke Ross's term of service, manumitting her when she turned 30 years old in 1861. He reduced the terms of service for approximately 29 slaves on the same day, providing for their freedom when they individually reached the age of 30 years old. See Court, Chattel Records. "Anthony C. Thompson to Sundry Negroes, May 12, 1856."

⁶⁰ Mary gave birth to two children with the surname Wells before she became free herself: an unidentified child born sometime in 1856, and another, Charles Wells, born in 1861. See Mary and her children listed as security for a promissory note. Note John Henry, Moses and Harriet are listed with the surname "Ross", and the other two children with "Wells." "Chattel Records." Talbot County Court Records. Maryland State Archives. Annapolis, MD.. "Thomas S. Haddaway & Sarah C. Haddaway to Alexander H. Seth and Charles W. Haddaway, August 3, 1858." The Bowley's were definitely in Dorchester County by 1868, as their son, John R., was born in Maryland that year. See 1870 U.S. Census, Dorchester County, MD.

⁶¹ Black parents were nearly powerless to prevent indentures of their children. In spite of their ability to support them or to teach their children trades, many black families found the local courts indifferent to their rights to their own children. Fuke, *Imperfect*. (Mary Manokey Ross Wells, the boys' mother, may have objected to their going North, though we have no documentation of this.

⁶² "Harkless Bowley Letters." Letter, Bowley to Conrad, August 24, 1939.

⁶³ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Letter, Bowley to Conrad, August 24, 1939. John Stewart apparently did not send for his daughter Harriet (Ritty) Ross. He may have decided that she should remain with her mother, or Mary may have insisted she remain with her. John had no relationship with his daughter before he ran away – she was born Christmas Eve 1854, the night he ran away with his sister Harriet.

⁶⁴ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Letter, Bowley to Conrad, August 24, 1939.

⁶⁵ Bradford, *Scenes*. 111-112.

⁶⁶ Bradford, *Scenes*. 112.

⁶⁷ Pension File, Nelson Charles [Nelson Davis], No. 449, 592.

⁶⁸ "Papers for Harriet Tubman Davis." Records of the U.S. House of Representatives, Record Group 233. National Archives. Washington, D.C.; see also Civil War Pension File, Harriet Tubman Davis Widow of Nelson Charles [Nelson Davis], Original Pension No. 449, 592. According to Tubman's testimony in he application for a widow's pension, Nelson's owner's name was "Fred Charles," but that his father's name was "Milford Davis." Presumably this is why Nelson changed his name for Nelson Charles to Nelson Davis. See Statement of Harriet Tubman Davis, November 10, 1894; see also Statements of Edgar J. Fryman, November 9, 1894, in Civil War Pension File, Harriet Tubman Davis Widow of Nelson Charles [Nelson Davis], Original Pension No. 449,592. Davis apparently ran away from his master sometime during or before 1861 and moved to Oneida County, New York (possibly Rome) a year of two before he enlisted in the army. See Statement of Charles H. Peterson, January 7, 1895, and Statement of Anna E. Thompson, June 19, 1894, in Civil War Pension File, Harriet Tubman Davis Widow of Nelson Charles [Nelson Davis], Original Pension No. 449,592.; Anna Thompson was the widow of Corporal Albert Thompson of the 8th USCT. Thompson came from Scipio, in Cayuga County, New York, and he and his wife lived in Auburn from at least 1860. See 1850 and 1860 U.S. Census, Cayuga County, N.Y. The brickyard may have been that of Sylvester Ross. See Bureau of the Census. *United States Federal Census*, 1860; Census. 1870, Cayuga County, N.Y.

⁶⁹ "Outrage in Talbot County. A Colored Man Murdered," *Baltimore News American*, Baltimore, MD, October 7, 1867.

⁷⁰ Foner, Reconstruction. 119-123. For Maryland, see, Fields, Slavery. 142-149.

⁷¹ Foner, Reconstruction. 120.

⁷² Fields, Slavery. 149-151.

⁷³ "Murdered."

⁷⁴ "Murdered."

⁷⁵ "Letter from Cambridge. Trial of Robert Vincent," *Baltimore Sun*, Baltimore, December 17, 1867.

⁷⁶ "Acquittal of Murderer," *The Baltimore American*, Baltimore, December 23, 1867. Tubman left behind his wife Caroline, and four children, Thomas, Ann, William and Alexander. See 1860 U.S. Census, Dorchester County, MD, and 1880 US Census, Dorchester County, MD.

⁷⁷ "Trial."

⁷⁸ Earl Conrad tried to research this question when writing his biography of Tubman, and was unable to discern whether she had been there or not. See Earl Conrad, Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Microfilm, 2 reels vols. (New York, N.Y.: Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: The New York Public Library.

⁷⁹ Holley, "Holley Letter."

⁸⁰ Holley, "Holley Letter."

⁸¹ Holley, "Holley Letter."

⁸² See "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, September 6, 1867." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College,. Northampton, MA.; Tubman knew the children of her anti-slavery friends quite well, and apparently held great affection for them. In this letter, Marta Wright told her daughter Ellen, after Ellen had visited Auburn with her new born baby, that Harriet Tubman came on Wednesday to see you and the baby - she didn't hear of your call till the evening before, & was so disappointed that her eyes filled with tears - She never shed a tear in telling me of all her troubles. I comforted her with Wm's donation, & she seemed grateful, & sent her love to you & all enquiring friends - she said she wd see you yet - I wish I had thought to send for her while you were here." See also, "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, March 22, 1868." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁸³ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, May 19, 1867." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁸⁴ To be held in February.

⁸⁵ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to William Pelham Wright, February 5, 1868." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College,. Northampton, MA.

⁸⁶ "Letter, M.C.W. To W.P.W., Feb. 5, 1868."

⁸⁷ Central Presbyterian Church was founded in 1861 under the pastorate of Rev. Henry Fowler. Prof. Samuel Hopkins, Sarah Bradford's brother, helped the new congregation get started, after which Henry Fowler was elected Pastor. In a dispute over slavery and the anti-slavery activism of Rev. Henry Fowler, Approximately 60 to 70 members of the second Presbyterian Society in Auburn seceded and formed the Central Presbyterian. Fowler, a fiery and "forcible advocate" of emancipation, was just the type of person Tubman was attracted to – a man who acted on his principles. D. Munson Osborne, Eliza Wright Osborne's husband was among the first trustees. See Cayuga County Historians Office, Auburn, NY, Verticle File, "Presbyterianism in Auburn." Sarah Bradford taught Sunday school here, where she met Tubman's parents, see Bradford, Scenes. (p. 3. "During a sojourn of some months in the city of Auburn, while the war was in progress, the writer used to see occasionally in her Sunday-school class the aged mother of Harriet, and also some of those girls who had been brought from the South by this remarkable woman. She also wrote letters for the old people to commanding officers at the South, making inquiries about Harriet, and received answers telling of her untiring devotion to our wounded and sick soldiers, and of her efficient aid in various ways to the cause of the Union." And in Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Sons, 1886). 129, "these old people, living out beyond the toll-gate, on the South Street road, Auburn, come in every Sunday -- more than a mile -- to the Central Church. To be sure, deep slumbers settle down upon them as soon as they are seated, which continue undisturbed till the congregation is dismissed; but they have done their best, and who can doubt that they receive a blessing. Immediately after this they go to class-meeting at the Methodist Church. Then they wait for a third service, and after that start out home again." Also, the marriages of family members are listed in Central Presbyterian's church records.

⁸⁸ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to William Pelham Wright, February 24, 1868." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College,. Northampton, MA.

⁸⁹ "Letter, M.C.Wright To William Pellham Wright, Feb. 24, 1868." See also, "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to William Pelham Wright, January 19, 1868." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College,. Northampton, MA.; and "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, February 9, 1868." Garrison Family

Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA.; and "Letter, M.C.W. To W.P.W., Feb. 5, 1868." .

⁹⁰ See for instance, Cousin Cicely, [Sarah H. Bradford], Ups and Downs; or, Silver Lake Sketches. (Auburn, N.Y.: Alden, Beardsley & Co., 1855).

⁹¹ Bradford would later publish a history of the town of Geneva, NY, and was often a contributor to magazines and newspapers. See James McGowan, "Harriet Tubman: According to Sarah Bradford," *Harriet Tubman Journal* Vol. 2,, no. 1, January, (1994):

⁹² "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Sisters, July 31, 1868." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁹³ McGowan, "Bradford,"

⁹⁴ I am grateful to Jean Humez for sharing her research on John M. Bradford. John Bradford had an affair with another woman, which was exposed in late 1856 or early 1857, ruining his reputation. He soon abandoned Sarah and their six children and moved to Chicago where he died in late 1860. See also, "Letter, Sarah H. Bradford to William H. Seward, January 26, 1857." William H. Seward Papers. Reel 54, no. 2100. ; and Humez, Tubman.

⁹⁵ "Letter, Wendell Phillips to Franklin B. Sanborn, Circa June 1868." Franklin B. Sanborn Papers. Concord Free Public Library. Concord, MA.; and "Letter, Franklin B. Sanborn to C.W. Slack, July 8, 1868." Anti-Slavery Collection. Rare Book and Manuscripts, Boston Public Library. Boston, MA.

⁹⁶ See Bradford, Scenes, for various testimonials. Not included in Scenes were letters, from Lucretia Mott and James A. Bowley, Tubman's nephew. Why their letters were not included is not known, although their testimonies may have come too late to add to the short narrative. See "Letter, James A. Bowley to "Aunt" [Harriet Tubman], 1868." Harriet Tubman Collection. Harriet Tubman Home Museum. Auburn, N.Y.; and "Letter, M.C.Wright to A. And P. Lord, Sept. 11, 1868." ; and "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Sisters, October 8, 1868." Garrison Family Papers. 39. folder 996, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁹⁷ Bradford, Scenes. 7-8. Oddly, Douglass never wrote about Tubman himself. He never mentions her in his autobiographies, and nothing has been located in any of his correspondence about her, save for the one letter written in 1859 [Philip S. Foner, ed., Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999). 600.] which does not specifically name Tubman. It is puzzling that this prolific writer and lecturer, who sheltered Tubman and her family and friends in his home, never wrote about her activities.

⁹⁸ In a letter written to Bradford in June, 1868, Fowler expressed his regrets about not being able to write Tubman's biography. "I wish to say to you how gratified I am that you are writing the biography of Harriet Tubman. I feel that her life forms part of the history of the country, and that it ought not to depend upon tradition to keep it in remembrance. Had not the pressure of professional claims prevented, I should have aspired to be her historian myself; but my disappointment in this regard is more than met by the satisfaction experienced in hearing that you are the chosen Miriam of this African "Moses;" the name by which she was known among her emancipated followers from the land of bondage. Blessed be God! a "Greater than Moses" has at last broken every bond." See Bradford, Scenes. 71.

⁹⁹ For an excellent analysis of Bradford's qualifications to write Tubman's biography, see McGowan, "Bradford," Jim was one of the very first to systematically analyze Bradford's work, comparing Scenes to her later revised biography of Tubman, Moses, noting inconsistencies and inaccuracies with both versions. He also discovered that Bradford was not known as a careful and diligent researcher, and that she apparently conflated, manufactured, or ignored important information in at least one of her other books, specifically, *The History of Geneva*.

¹⁰⁰ "Letter, Sarah H. Bradford to William H. Seward, August 17, 1868." William H. Seward Papers. Reel 105, No. 4377. See also, Bradford, Scenes. i., "The narrative was prepared on the eve of the author's departure for Europe, where she still remains." Bradford stayed in Europe for nine years before returning to Geneva, NY. See "Research Correspondence." Earl Conrad/ Harriet Tubman Collection. Reel 1. Boxes 1 and 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York., Louise Bradford Varnum to Earl Conrad, June 10, 1839.

¹⁰¹ Bradford, Scenes. i.

¹⁰² Bradford, Scenes. 3.

¹⁰³ Bradford, Scenes. 4.

¹⁰⁴ Bradford, Scenes. 4

¹⁰⁵ Humez, Tubman. Humez points out that most of Tubman's biographers selectively edited and reformulated her stories to fit within the proscribed cultural norms of middle-class literary and social expectations. These mediated stories also fit within a range of acceptable slave narrative stories, at once horrible and redeeming, which ultimately comforted the white reader, but did little to convey the inner truths of the slave experience.

¹⁰⁶ McGowan, "Bradford,"

¹⁰⁷ Bradford, Scenes. (See McGowan, "Bradford," Both Milton Sernett, in his forthcoming book on the Memory of Harriet Tubman, and Jean Humez in her work on Tubman, argue that the "Essay on Woman-Whipping" was not penned by Bradford, but by some other unidentified abolitionist. Though a powerful statement about violence in the south, it appears to be filler at the end of a very short book.

¹⁰⁸ "Account Record. Sales of "Scenes."" Harriet Tubman Collection. Harriet Tubman Home Museum. Auburn, N.Y.

¹⁰⁹ "Letter, Ellen Wright Garrison to Martha Coffin Wright, December 26, 1868." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

¹¹⁰ "Letter, M.C.W. To Sisters, July 31, 1868."

¹¹¹ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to William Lloyd Garrison, II, January 10, 1869." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College., Northampton, MA.

¹¹² Bradford, Scenes. 119-120.

¹¹³ Bradford, Scenes. 122-124.

¹¹⁴ "Subscription List." Harriet Tubman Collection. Harriet Tubman Home Museum. Auburn, N.Y. See also, "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, September 24, 1868." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College., Northampton, MA..

¹¹⁵ "Letter, M.C.Wright to A. And P. Lord, Sept. 11, 1868." Anna Mott Hopper and Patty Mott Lord were Lucretia Mott's daughters.

¹¹⁶ "Letter, M.C.Wright to A. And P. Lord, Sept. 11, 1868."

¹¹⁷ Bradford, Scenes. 112.

¹¹⁸ Bradford, Scenes. 112.

¹¹⁹ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Sisters, October 8, 1868."

¹²⁰ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Sisters, October 8, 1868."

¹²¹ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, December 16, 1868." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College., Northampton, MA.

¹²² Apparently, W. J. Moses was not the first choice to publish Tubman's book. William Henry Wise approached Ticknor and Fields, a prominent Boston based publisher, about publishing Tubman's narrative, but apparently they declined. Martha Wright noticed that

on page 60 of Scenes, for instance, "sinner's flesh," was supposed to be "swine's flesh."
 "Letter, M.C.Wright to E.W.Garrison, December 16, 1868."

¹²³ "Letter, M.C.Wright to E.W.Garrison, December 16, 1868."

¹²⁴ "Letter, M.C.Wright to E.W.Garrison, December 16, 1868." Martha also managed to get six signatures for a "Suffrage Petition" while attending the fair.

¹²⁵ See "Account, 1869." See also, Garrison Family papers, letters between Martha Wright and family members, winter and spring 1869.

¹²⁶ "Account, 1869."

¹²⁷ Franklin B. Sanborn, "A Negro Heroine - Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman," in Transcendental Youth and Age, ed. Kenneth Walter Cameron (Hartford, CT: Transcendental Books, 1869).

¹²⁸ Sanborn, "Heroine."

¹²⁹ Sanborn, "Heroine." See also mention in "Notice," *Freedmen's Record*. Vol. 5, no. 1 February 1869, (1869):

¹³⁰ "Account, 1869."

¹³¹ See Green. "Tubman Home,"

¹³² "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, October 20, 1869." Garrison Family papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

CHAPTER XII

MYTH AND MEMORY

From the end of the Civil War to her death in 1913, Tubman's fame and notoriety fluctuated dramatically. Her public image as a heroine, and a "Black Joan of Arc," was secured by the appearance of Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman in 1869.¹ Its publication marked a new phase in Tubman's life; bringing some financial relief and increased public attention, it provided Tubman with more opportunities to raise awareness of the plight of freedmen and women. But it also marked a turning point in her immortalization. From this point forward, Bradford's narrative defined Tubman's public identity; the story ends with her Civil War activities, and her heroic feats on the Underground Railroad and during the war define her as a freedom fighter without equal.

In a letter written for inclusion in her biography, Frederick Douglass wrote to Tubman that only "the midnight sky and the silent stars have been the witnesses of your devotion to freedom and of your heroism," drawing attention to the fact that all of her heroic deeds were not accomplished in full view of the public.² With the publication of *Scenes*, Tubman emerged as more than a Moses; she was also a David figure, striking a fatal blow to an almighty Goliath. She had challenged white and male authority, emerging the victor in an unequal battle of race and gender. But such imagery could only work well in the immediate post-emancipation period, when the goal of racial and gender equality seemed ever closer.

The publication of Scenes did not, however, help her win her claim for pay from the U.S. government. Charles P. Wood, a local Auburn banker, took up Tubman's cause. He interviewed her and wrote an account of her war service, including testimonials from various Union officers, like Col. James Montgomery and General Saxton, certifying Tubman's war activity.³ Tubman claimed the government owed her \$966 for "Services as a Scout," from May 25, 1862 to January 31, 1865, a total of thirty-two and a half months at \$30 per month. She deducted \$200 from the total to account for money she was paid while on duty in the Department of the South, leaving \$766 unpaid.⁴

While regular army soldiers were paid \$15 per month, the Union paid scouts, spies and detectives approximately \$2.00 to \$2.50 per day for their services.⁵ Tubman, then, was asking for less pay per diem than what other commissioned scouts would have been paid, but clearly she did not act as a scout or spy every day of her service during the war. Her claim was rejected for unknown reasons; Congressman McDougall of New York introduced a bill to Congress in 1874 asking for relief for Tubman, but to no avail.⁶ Tubman's accomplishments and contributions to the Union cause went largely unrecognized by the government until the turn of the century.

In the meantime, Tubman's daily life of work and family took on a more local cast; with the exception of occasional trips to Canada, Boston, and the Eastern Shore to visit family and friends, Tubman's life remained rooted in the Auburn community. The daily routine of her more modest existence was no match for the accomplishments of a determined freedom fighter whose exploits captured the imaginations of a generation. Because of this, much of her later life has remained obscured and long forgotten.

Community, work, and family consumed much of Tubman's efforts during the latter part of her life. Finally in a position to think of her own personal needs, perhaps, after so many years of acting on the behalf of others, Tubman fell in love with Nelson Davis, her boarder of three years. On Thursday, March 18th, 1869, in a ceremony officiated by Rev. Henry Fowler at the Central Presbyterian Church in Auburn, Harriet and Nelson were married in the presence of "friends... and a large number of the first families in the city."⁷

Though Tubman maintained ownership of her home – the 1870 census records her as the owner of the property valued at \$600 – she and Nelson ran a brick making operation to the rear of their property, possibly quite close to another brick making business run by Sylvester Ross and others near the same location.⁸ The presence of clay in the local soil made such an enterprise attractive. Harkless Bowley recalled working in the brickyard, located adjacent to Tubman's property to the east, when he lived with Tubman for two or more years before rejoining his family, then living in Dorchester County, MD.⁹ The presence of a brickyard on and near such a small piece of property proved to be hazardous to Tubman's crops; in October 1869, Martha Wright reported that Tubman and her family were once again in need of assistance, as her "garden had failed, by the wet season & the masons turning water on it."¹⁰

Nelson Davis was a sick man for most of the time he lived in Auburn. Suffering with tuberculosis, he probably could not work consistently, so support of the household often fell on Tubman's shoulders. Some people believed Tubman married Davis in order to take care of him.¹¹ He was "a magnificent specimen in appearance," Helen Tatlock recalled, "big, black, a true African."¹² Alice Brickler, however, thought Davis was a

“colorless creature,” and to be “handsome and tubercular is not even romantic.”¹³

Another friend of Tubman’s recalled the marriage was not “very workable... Harriet was such a busy woman devoted to her social interests that perhaps a domestic life was never the foremost thing to her.”¹⁴ Nevertheless, Davis worked in the brickyard, helped farm Tubman’s property, and was also an active member of the community, joining the Board of Trustees of St. Mark’s A.M.E. Church at its founding in March 1870 along with several former Marylanders, including John Purnell and Jonathan Waire, who may have been former slaves as well.¹⁵

Harriet not only worked on her farm and in the brickyard, but also hired herself out as a domestic to Auburn’s wealthier families. Lazette Worden and Martha Coffin Wright both hired Harriet for spring-cleaning: Theodore Pomeroy, whose children “she had rocked and tended in infancy,” also hired Harriet for domestic services.¹⁶ She bartered and sold items when she could, and with additional income from occasional boarders, she and Nelson managed to support her parents and those who happened to make their way to her doorstep in search of food and a place to stay.¹⁷

Many of Tubman’s family and friends had settled more permanently into residences of their own within a growing black settlement in Auburn, less than a mile or so from Tubman’s own home. Auburn’s wealthier families employed them, too, usually as coachmen, domestics, and day laborers, while some took employment in the city’s various manufacturing businesses. Many earned enough money to buy homes, and some could afford to let mothers and wives stay at home “keeping house,” a middle class ideal that must have seemed so far removed from their days in slavery.¹⁸

While Tubman's fame was still fresh from the publication of Scenes, William Still, the Underground Railroad conductor in Philadelphia who had helped Tubman, published his eight-hundred-page documentary volume, The Underground Railroad. Based on records he had kept while secretary of the Vigilance Committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, Still's book highlighted the role slaves themselves played in their own liberation.¹⁹ He gave special acknowledgment to Tubman's "adventurous spirit and utter disregard of consequences," which accounted for her successful missions to the Eastern Shore. "In point of courage," Still wrote, "shrewdness and disinterested exertions to rescue her fellow-men... she was without her equal."²⁰ Though he claimed Tubman was "utterly devoid of personal fear," he acknowledged that she was extremely cautious and intolerant of the "weak-kneed and faint-hearted,"²¹ requiring total adherence to a "very short and pointed rule or law of her own, which implied death to any who talked of giving out or going back."²²

Oddly, however, given Tubman's stature as "Moses" who brought away scores of slaves on the Underground Railroad, many through Still's office, he devotes little more than these brief mentions to describing her career as an Underground Railroad agent. While he may have felt that Tubman's own biography spoke for itself and there was no need to highlight her accomplishments further, the briefness (one page or so) in which he discusses Tubman's contributions to the Underground Railroad stands in direct contrast to the thirty pages he devotes to praising the anti-slavery and post emancipation work of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. A well-educated, freeborn, African American woman, an accomplished poet and writer, Watkins emerged from the anti-slavery lecture circuit to become an advocate for women's rights and temperance reform.²³ Still's descriptions of

the two women are striking in their differences. "Harriet," he wrote, "was a woman of no pretensions, indeed, a more ordinary specimen of humanity could hardly be found among the most unfortunate-looking farm hands of the South."²⁴ Harper, by contrast to the illiterate former slave, represented an ideal of middle-class black womanhood. Harper was a "laborer, battling for freedom under slavery and the war... [and] for Equality before the law – education, and a higher manhood, especially in the south, among the Freedmen."²⁵ While Harper's accomplishments as an anti-slavery lecturer, sometime Underground Railroad helper and supporter, and prolific writer are without doubt laudatory accomplishments, Still's claims that "want of space forbids more than a brief reference to [Harper's] early life," seems specious given the thirty pages he devotes to her biographical sketch.²⁶ Apparently, Tubman, whose many accomplishments are condensed into one page, no longer fit the model of the future of black womanhood, at least in the eyes of William Still and his perceived audience. But it may not have mattered to Harriet; her reputation as Moses was well entrenched in the African American and liberal white community. Still's book did not bring her additional monetary support, so her daily life of struggling to make ends meet continued unabated.

Harriet's father, Ben Ross, died sometime during 1871; in his mid 80s, Ben had suffered much with rheumatism and probably had been quite incapacitated during his last years in Auburn. Friends were concerned that Harriet's mother was soon to follow him, but she managed to survive for several more years.²⁷ While the proceeds from Scenes was supposed to have gone toward her mortgage with Seward, it appears that no payments were made for the following three years after the publication of the book. On October 10, 1872, William Henry Seward died, and Seward's son, Frederick inherited the

note on the property, which had grown to over \$1500.²⁸ There is no record what Tubman did with the money from the sales of her book, and in fact there is no record that she received any of the funds directly. Seward may have agreed not to take payment until Tubman was more financially secure herself. Some of the funds may have been doled out to her in times of greatest need. Alternatively, Tubman may have used some of the money to support herself and her family, purchase equipment to run the brick business, or sent funds to educational and relief efforts in South Carolina. On May 29, 1873, Frederick Seward signed over the seven-acre property to Tubman in exchange for a lump-sum payment of \$1200, the original mortgage of the home. The rest of her debt to the Seward estate was forgiven.²⁹

Within months of this transaction, however, Tubman found herself, and her brother John, implicated in the theft of \$2,000. In the middle of September, a man named Stevenson, “a Yellow fellow,” appeared in Seneca Falls, N.Y., attempting to persuade individuals there that he had access to “a large quantity” of gold hidden in neighboring Cayuga County, which he was willing to trade for \$2000 in cash.³⁰ Various individuals in the black community were consulted, but the money could not be raised to complete the deal, so Stevenson moved on to Auburn to try his luck there. Zadoc Bell was the first man he approached, but Bell, suspicious, sent Stevenson away. Bell later told the *Auburn Daily Bulletin* that he remembered a similar incident occurring in St. Catharines a couple of years earlier, where several of his friends had lost five hundred dollars in a scam involving Confederate gold. Having been turned away by Bell, Stevenson and an accomplice, John Thomas, sought the help of John Stewart, Tubman’s brother. Stevenson and Thomas told Stewart that they had a friend, “contraband” from South

Carolina who had “a large sum of gold... which he had kept since the war – being afraid to use any of it, or to let any white man know about it.”³¹ The men convinced Stewart that they had approximately five thousand dollars in gold pieces, but that they would take two thousand dollars in “greenbacks,” or cash, “which would be worth more... in South Carolina than the entire sum of gold.”³²

John Stewart told them that he could not raise the money, but that “his sister might be able to effect the transaction with some of her white friends.”³³ After being rejected by a local banker, who told him he needed to see the gold first before he would get involved in the transaction, Stewart took Stevenson and Thomas to see Harriet. She took them into her home, where they lodged for several nights. Stevenson convinced Tubman that he and Harris, the “contraband” from South Carolina, knew her nephew, “Alfred Bowley,” and that he had told them about her, thereby deflecting doubts she might have initially harbored regarding their characters.³⁴ Tubman later told the local newspaper that she recalled seeing a “trunk full of gold and silver buried in Beaufort, South Carolina,” during the war, so this claim did not seem impossible to her. Thus convinced of their honesty and sincerity, Tubman visited several white friends in Auburn and Fleming and asked for money to exchange for the gold. She was cautioned more than once, however, that she was probably dealing with “robbers [who] might eventually take her life.”³⁵ Harriet approached John Osborne, who in turn inquired of David Wright, but Wright cautioned Osborne to “have nothing to do with it.”³⁶ Charles P. Wood was approached, and he too, declined involvement.

Tubman was persistent, however, so David Wright suggested that she “better leave such dealings to Shimer.”³⁷ Anthony Shimer was a successful local merchant and real

estate investor, like many of Auburn's elite businessmen a risk taker and entrepreneur. He was a member of Central Presbyterian Church, where Tubman and many of Auburn's liberal elite families met for religious services. He was also a bigger gambler, apparently, than most other Auburnians, which may account for his vast wealth at the time of his death in 1896.³⁸ It may also explain why Wright suggested Tubman discuss the suspicious deal with Shimer; as a known risk-taker, Shimer's reputation for pursuing unlikely opportunities may have offered Wright a way out of shutting the door to Tubman's request for money while opening another.³⁹

Stewart and Tubman eventually persuaded Anthony Shimer to provide the \$2000 to complete the transactions. In spite of protestations from his bankers, Shimer withdrew the cash from his accounts and gave the money to Tubman.⁴⁰ A friend of Tubman's, Shimer trusted her part of the story, and he believed this opportunity was too good to pass up; the interest he could earn on the gold was far greater than what could be earned on cash. He was cautious, however; he requested that his banker, Charles O'Brien, accompany them to the rendezvous point at Fleming Hill. But the "contraband," Harris, was not there when they arrived at the appointed time. Stevenson convinced Tubman, Stewart, Shimer, and O'Brien that Harris was leery of white men and would not come forward. After much discussion, it was decided that Tubman would go on alone with Stevenson to meet Harris and give him the money personally, while the rest waited at a nearby tavern for her return.⁴¹

Stevenson brought Tubman to where Harris was hiding; there she noted that Harris appeared "scared and troubled."⁴² Leading her across a field and into some woods near Poplar Ridge, the two men showed her a trunk partially buried in the ground. Harris

insisted he receive the money before opening the chest, but Tubman refused. Suddenly Harris remembered that he had “forgotten” the key to the box; Stevenson and Harris started back to the place where Harris had been hiding, while Harriet waited by the box, still holding the money.⁴³

It was getting dark, and Tubman became suspicious and worried. She looked closer at the box and realized there was no keyhole. She later told investigators that she became frightened, “thinking of stories about ghosts haunting buried treasures.”⁴⁴ She tried to walk out of the woods, but was alarmed by “something white” which she feared was a ghost. As she moved closer to it, she realized it was a cow, which became frightened by her movements in the dark. The cow “started off in a mad run, which startled up numerous other cows, all joining in a wild prance about the woods.”⁴⁵ She returned to the box and attempted to break it open, but she became somewhat disoriented, later recalling, “all the woods seemed filled with the wild cattle, and specters.” Then, suddenly, the “two men were at her side. She sank down grasping for the box, and lost all consciousness.”⁴⁶

Tubman awoke later to find herself bound and gagged. She stumbled and struggled over two fences “by resting her chin on the top rail, to steady herself while she climbed up, and then dropped to the ground.”⁴⁷ In the meantime, her brother John, Shimer, and O’Brien were also becoming alarmed; Harriet did not return at the expected time, so they set out to look for her. They found her trying to find her way to them; she was “cut and bruised, her clothing torn,” and the money gone. Tubman, Martha Wright wrote to her daughter Ellen in Boston the next day, was taken to “the tavern but she became insensible & all remains a mystery.”⁴⁸ The box was later discovered to contain only rocks.⁴⁹ Shimer was furious; he demanded his money returned, claiming he had only “loaned” Tubman

the money for the deal, with her home as security.⁵⁰ Shimer's claims did not sway anyone, so he lost the two thousand dollars – he was a prominent businessman who had taken a great risk and lost; few people apparently felt sympathy for him. Years later, at his death, the local newspaper would claim that “in 1873, Shimer lost more money than he ever lost before or since through reposing too much confidence in fellow beings.” Afterwards, the newspaper declared, “a change was noticeable in the old man.”⁵¹

Though Tubman and her brother may have found themselves under a cloud of suspicion, the newspaper reports seem to sympathize with Tubman, noting that her “sanguine imagination” over smuggled Confederate gold had outweighed her better judgment. Tubman's reputation as a heroine and a “celebrated colored philanthropist” carried public opinion in her favor, effectively deflecting any suspicion cast upon herself and her brother.⁵² The newspaper was quick to point out that John Stewart was an “honest and industrious man,” and Zadoc Bell, the first black Auburnian to have been approached by the con men, was a “reliable, straight-forward man, industrious and steady,” in direct contrast to the “confidence” man, Stevenson.⁵³ The *Daily* insisted that though the scheme looked “very ‘thin’ ... especially so to those who bit at the bait and were ‘caught’,” it was, in the end, Shimer's own fault for going along with the scheme in the first place.⁵⁴

Beaten badly enough to need some care, or perhaps needing to be out of the spotlight for a few days, Tubman went to recuperate at Emily Howland's home in Sherwood.⁵⁵ Howland found her “pleasant and bright, and entertaining with her accounts of adventure in Camp and forest leading her fellow bondmen to freedom.”⁵⁶ Jean Humez argues that Tubman may have been consciously deflecting suspicion away from herself by

redirecting her hostess's attention toward Tubman's former days of heroism and glory. Humez argues further that Tubman's insertion of the "ghost" stories into her narrative of the events in the woods, juxtaposed with her retelling of her Underground Railroad stories to Howland, may be a "rare view of Harriet Tubman adapting her Underground Railroad concealment skills," as a clever survival strategy, for "the clever trickster of the Underground Railroad days could undoubtedly resurface in an emergency" to protect herself and her family.⁵⁷ Ultimately, Tubman may have fed, willingly or not, into existing racialized expectations of the superstitious black woman, thereby providing herself with ample protection from those voices who may have been searching for clearer explanations to the mysterious sequence of events. Fortunately for Tubman, Shimer bore the brunt of the negative fallout from the ordeal, indicating the complex layers of behavior and relationships Tubman had to negotiate in order to survive every day.

The motivations for Tubman's involvement in this curious situation are clear; constantly struggling for money, her needs overcame sound judgment, putting herself and her brother at great risk of not only criminal charges, but also local humiliation. That they survived both is a testament to the community's willingness to overlook Tubman's failings in this regard; her neediness was obvious and no surprise to anyone in Auburn, and that she could be so foolish as to be duped by con men reinforced the racist views that many held regarding uneducated African Americans. Nevertheless, Tubman's friends stood by her, listened to her version of the events, and elicited great sympathy for her latest troubles.⁵⁸

Little is known of Tubman's activities throughout the rest of the 1870s and early 1880s. She continued to operate her farm with Nelson; in 1875 they raised potatoes,

vegetables, and a few apples, made butter, and sold eggs, chickens, and perhaps a few pigs. They also continued to operate the brickyard.⁵⁹ An economic depression during the early to mid 1870s created “hard times” for farmers and laborers like Tubman and her brothers.⁶⁰ John Stewart worked for D.M. Osborne & Co., Eliza Wright Osborne’s husband’s farm equipment manufacturing company, as a “teamster.”⁶¹ John owned his own team of horses, but he also worked for the Osbornes privately, plowing, grading, and “grubbing” their garden during the spring, summer and fall.⁶² John’s sons, John Henry and Moses, probably worked as laborers in the local manufacturing companies.

Tubman’s home remained a refuge for those in need. In 1874, Harriet and Nelson adopted a baby girl named Gertie, raising her in their home as their own daughter. Though her birth parents remain unknown to us, Gertie Davis represents a different side to the Nelson and Harriet relationship – they were committed to each other as a family, and, with Gertie, they could fulfill a long-neglected aspect of Tubman’s life as a woman, that of being a mother to her own daughter.⁶³ Gertie joined an already very crowded household; along with her mother Rit, Tubman welcomed four other boarders, including Sarah Parker, a seventy-five-year-old blind widow who may have been a long-time family friend or relative from Maryland.

In October 1880, Harriet Tubman’s mother, Rit, died.⁶⁴ Rit had lived nearly a century. Born enslaved, she had experienced first hand many of the terrors of slavery. She died a free woman, surrounded by family and friends, including children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, many of whom who were building successful lives. By 1880, Tubman’s extended family had grown considerably. Margaret Stewart, Tubman’s “favorite niece,” had married Henry Lucas in 1873 at Central Presbyterian

Church and settled into a home on Cornell Street.⁶⁵ Her nephew, William Henry Stewart, Jr., Tubman's brother William Henry's son, had moved to Auburn sometime before 1875 from Canada, and then married Emma Moseby in 1879. John Henry Stewart, Tubman's brother John's son, had married Eliza Smith, and by 1880 they had three children, Dora, 5, Gertrude, 3, and Clarence, 1. Elijah Stewart had married, too, settling into the same close knit black neighborhood as the other Stewart family members, with his wife Georgia and child Esther.⁶⁶ Ann Marie Stewart Elliott, Tubman's great niece, had died, though, leaving behind Thomas and their two daughters, Mary and Nellie.⁶⁷ Tubman's other friends, many of them refugees from slavery on the Eastern Shore or acquaintances from St. Catharines, were also adding to their own extended families, creating a strong and self-sustaining post-emancipation black community whose roots could be traced to Tubman's early leadership.

At some point time between 1882 and 1884, Tubman's wood frame farmhouse in Fleming burned down, and "most of her interesting collection of letters from prominent Abolitionists and Union officers was destroyed."⁶⁸ No doubt these were the least of the things Harriet lost that day. Harriet, Nelson, and Gertie, however, probably found shelter with her brother John, who was then living next door with his wife Millie and his son Moses, or with other relatives and friends in the Auburn community.⁶⁹ A brick residence was soon built over the ruins of the original home, however, possibly by the masons employed in the brickyards surrounding her property, who presumably installed the now missing Masonic symbol near the peak in the roof on the front face of the house.⁷⁰ Though Nelson was probably quite ill by this time with advanced stages of tuberculosis, he and Harriet may have even contributed their own labor to the rebuilding of the home.

While no records have been located to indicate such a possibility, it seems likely that family and friends also contributed to the rebuilding of Tubman's home.⁷¹

The early 1880s brought more difficult times for Tubman. Her nephew, John Henry Stewart died, leaving behind his wife, Eliza, and their three small children. Nelson's health continued to deteriorate, requiring more and more care and leaving the financial responsibilities of the household more fully on Tubman's shoulders. During the summer of 1884, Tubman experienced another tremendous financial blow: her herd of hogs was dying from an unknown disease. On July 11, *The Evening Auburnian* reported that forty of Tubman's hogs had already died, and that "she fears she will lose them all."⁷² By this date, Tubman was apparently using her farm as a "swine ranch." According to the *Auburnian*, Tubman had become "the chief garbage system in this city;" she collected garbage "at the back doors of Auburn," carted it back to her property and fed it to her stock of hogs.⁷³ Hog cholera was ruled out as the source of the deaths, and Tubman surmised it was from poisoning. She told the newspaper that she suspected it was common household poisons, used to kill rats, bed bugs and cockroaches, which had found its way into the garbage she collected. The poison had been "swept up" into the "slop pail or garbage bucket" which was then carted off by Tubman to her farm. The editors of the paper, though perhaps sympathetic to Tubman's plight, nevertheless found some humor in her crisis, adding, "the devastation of [Tubman's] hog herds is chargeable to that vernal nightmare – house cleaning."⁷⁴

Tubman's own health also remained precarious; her headaches and TLE seizures continued to affect her. On January 29th, 1884, Tubman visited Eliza Wright Osborne. Sick with "lung trouble," Tubman was in need of some medicine for her cough. But she

was also deeply troubled by recent “mysterious dreams and thoughts that had come to her,” Osborne later wrote to her daughter Emily Harris. In her letter, Osborne described what might have been a TLE seizure in progress while Tubman visited with her that morning. “While Harriet sat here,” Osborne wrote, “ she said she heard a harp playing... she seemed sensible enough. She said water and fire troubled her – she lately saw so many people drowning and some burning up.”⁷⁵ Tubman “dreamed of the drowning” the week before, Osborne wrote, which coincided with a fatal maritime accident at that time. Evidently eager to validate Tubman’s visions, Osborne showed Tubman a newspaper from the week before which reported the story of the fatal “wreck of the Columbia.”⁷⁶ The steamer *City of Columbus* had run aground during a storm off Gay Head on Martha’s Vineyard on January 18. Over one hundred passengers and crew were lost, including many women and children. Tubman “had not heard of it,” Osborne wrote to Emily, adding to the mystery of Tubman’s prescient visions. Later Sarah Bradford noted that at one time Tubman had a terrible dream, and in “great agitation [she] ran to the houses of her colored neighbors, exclaiming that ‘a dreadful thing was happening somewhere, the ground was opening, and the houses were falling in, and the people being killed faster than they was in the war – faster than they was in the war’.”⁷⁷ Bradford noted that at that time, “or near it,” there was an earthquake in South America, “though why a vision of it should be sent to Harriet no one can divine.”⁷⁸ On October 13, 1984, the *Auburn Daily Advertiser* reported that “a considerable amount of excitement” had been caused by Tubman, whose “reputation is national,” when she was “seized with what is familiarly known as the ‘power’ and began shouting and singing” on the street outside the city jail.⁷⁹ She had just come from visiting her nephew, Moses Stewart, who was lodged in the jail

on charges of petty larceny.⁸⁰ The Sheriff brought Harriet back into the building, where a Dr. Hamlin “succeeded in quieting her after a time.”⁸¹ The manifestations of her TLE seizures in a public place are a reminder of the often-unexpected nature of the illness. In the absence of modern medical understanding, these stories offer an interesting perspective on how the community chose to accommodate and cope with her seizures. While a modern physician might attribute her seizures to physical causes, for Tubman herself, as well as Osborne, Bradford, the Sheriff, and most probably her family and friends, Tubman’s powerful faith lay at the root of her outbursts, visions, sleeping spells, and voices.⁸²

Tubman’s deep religious faith inspired and awed many who knew her. Reverend James E. Mason remembered meeting Tubman for the first time at the A.M.E. Zion Church in Auburn during the 1880s, when the church was still located on Washington Street. He noticed her, sitting close to the front of the church, “with shoulders somewhat stooped, head bent forward,” making her seem older than her sixty years. She stood up and started to “give testimony to God’s goodness and long-suffering.” Soon she was shouting, inspiring others to join in, Mason recalled, and “she possessed such endurance, vitality and magnetism that I inquired and was informed it was Harriet Tubman – the ‘Moses of her people’.”⁸³ Others remembered how she incorporated Scriptural quotations into her everyday conversation.⁸⁴

Tubman’s spirituality and visionary experiences served to insulate her from questions about her integrity or intellectual capacity. Tubman’s illiteracy has shaped the way others have understood her. Hillary McD. Beckles argues that most scholars have looked at women as indirect participants in protest and rebellion. Beckles states

"women's behaviour is particularly vulnerable to the ideological charge that actions emanate from some place other than the cerebral."⁸⁵ At a time when literacy was a marker for class status and intelligence, many whites viewed Tubman's illiteracy as a liability. Fortunately for Tubman, her spirituality allowed her to claim respectability and authority when few black women could do so. Yet, even later historians have muted attention to Tubman's intellectual life in deference to a highly mythologized tradition that stresses Tubman's spiritual life, verging on the supernatural.⁸⁶

From the late 1850s and throughout the Civil War, Tubman challenged accepted notions about women's roles in public and in the home, but she also argued for black women's spiritual authority. She represented female self-determination in high relief and in an alternative form from the identity embraced by middle class and well-educated black women such as Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, Charlotte Forten, Sarah Remond, Mary Ann Shadd Carey, and others. While Tubman's spirituality is a staple of her iconography, Bradford and other observers ignored Tubman's intellectual life because it did not fit the carefully circumscribed notions of late 19th century literate womanhood.

By the 1880s, however, Tubman's fame as an Underground Railroad agent and Civil War warrior had faded significantly. Tubman had not been a constant fixture at suffrage or black rights conventions and meetings around New England and New York throughout the 1870s and early 1880s, where she might have maintained her image in the public eye as she had prior to and even during the Civil War. A newer and younger group of activists were more often seen at these conventions, many of them middle-class and highly literate in distinct contrast to Tubman. In addition, many of the old abolitionist guard had passed away, including Lucretia Mott, Thomas Garrett, Wendell Phillips,

William Lloyd Garrison, Jermain Loguen, Lewis Hayden, Martha Coffin Wright and Gerrit Smith, leaving Tubman with a shrinking support system. While a few new friends were ready to step in to help Tubman. Martha Coffin Wright's daughter, Eliza Wright Osborne, and the Garrison children buoyed Tubman when she needed it the most, but the support was not the same as in prior years. With the exception of a few local newspaper articles in the late 1860s and early 1870s that mentioned Tubman, Bradford's *Scenes* still remained the primary source for Tubman's life story. Its limited publication run of twelve hundred copies, however, did not provide a wide enough circulation to keep Tubman's life story in current memory. Sarah Bradford herself even noted in 1886 that the "facts" of Tubman's life were "all unknown to the present generation."⁸⁷ Tubman had been, it seems, quickly forgotten.

But her needs were tremendous by 1886; after rebuilding her home, struggling with her own ill-health and that of her husband, Nelson, and still trying to support sick, homeless and needy boarders in her home, she finally turned to Bradford and asked her to re-issue *Scenes*.⁸⁸ "Another necessity has arisen," Bradford wrote in the preface to the 1886 edition, "and she needs help again not for herself, but for certain helpless ones of her people."⁸⁹

Called Harriet Tubman, The Moses of Her People, this new edition was issued at a time when the nation was struggling through a period of reconciliation and reunification between the North and South. Eager to heal the bitter wounds still lingering from the Civil War and Reconstruction, Americans longed for a unified nation with a unified past. A re-imaging of the history of the ante-bellum period and the Civil War became necessary to create a history appropriate for this unity. According to David Blight, the

“historical memory of any transforming or controversial event emerges from cultural and political competition, from the choice to confront the past and to debate and manipulate it’s meaning.”⁹⁰ The desire for reconciliation and reunification demanded a history that softened the harsh reality of slavery. Increasingly disfranchised throughout the South, African Americans stood helpless as their history and memories of slavery and the war were deliberately obscured. In this environment, then, the reprinting of Tubman’s original narrative, Scenes, became problematic – a new version was necessary, a version more in tune with the new political reality of reunification. Bradford’s new edition, exemplified this re-creation of historical memory. Though in many ways a reprint of the first edition, it was a less demanding and less detailed biography with a milder and more stereotypical image of a former slave than the Harriet Tubman of the 1869 book.

By the end of the 1870s, the fate of Reconstruction was sealed; with the inauguration of Rutherford B. Hayes as president, support for the federal military occupation of the southern states and other negotiations collectively known as the Compromise of 1877 brought an end to the advancement of the freedmen’s interests.⁹¹ In its place, the subjugation of African Americans found renewed energy among both Southern and Northern whites. As David Blight suggests in Race and Reunion, reconciliation between the North and South forged ahead as political and economic reunification, while African American rights became “sacrificial offerings on the altar of reunion.”⁹² By the 1880s, Blight argues, the contest over the memory of the Civil War, and why it was fought, was dominated by white reconciliators and veterans, whose needs to “celebrate a common American manhood” muted and ignored African American veterans’ memories as well as the black community’s struggle to maintain its own memory of slavery, the war, and

Reconstruction.⁹³ The glory of the Lost Cause and mourning for the old South overshadowed the brutality and exploitation that had defined slavery.

By the mid 1880's, "Blue and Grey" soldier reunions were taking place, and a "deliberate negotiation of a mutually acceptable version of the sectional conflict," was under way, obscuring any contradictory memories or histories that challenged the new unified history.⁹⁴ Historian David Blight demonstrated the struggles of Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. DuBois to "forge an African American countermemory."⁹⁵ Douglass, according to Blight, struggled to preserve and remember the "regenerative meaning of the Civil War" with emancipation at its center.⁹⁶ DuBois, like Douglass, believed that Americans suffered from historical amnesia, which contributed to a master narrative that celebrated "a people of progress," detached from oppression, poverty and racial tension.⁹⁷

For Frederick Douglass, historical memory was "not merely an entity altered by the passage of time; it was the prize in a struggle between rival versions of the past, a question of will, of power, of persuasion."⁹⁸ Douglass clearly understood that the question of who owns history is political, intellectual and emotional. The ability of those in power to shape the memory of the Civil war demonstrated the tremendous implications of the powerful political agenda that sought to rebuild the nation as a whole. Douglass also realized that the memory of the Civil War was being shaped as much by what was being forgotten, as by what was purposefully being remembered and reinterpreted (or represented as the memory.)

David Lowenthal has argued that "the character of the past depends on how - and how much - it is consciously apprehended."⁹⁹ The transformation of the memory of the

Civil War exemplified the power of myth making, and the ability to create a collective memory of the event went a long way toward reunion. *Forgetting* that emancipation was the “the great result of the war,” was the “great result” of reconciliation.¹⁰⁰ For blacks, however, this transformation robbed them of a culturally important historical moment. As white Northerners and Southerners struggled to move beyond the sectional conflict, the desire to rebuild a unified nation meant that they had to create a unified history. Part of the unified history required the remembering of the war as an image of the present. Douglass could see the manipulative potential of this myth-making; in this process, the Old South’s cultural and sentimental investment in slavery was also mythologized as part of the Lost Cause, and served to deny African Americans a right to their bitter memories of slavery, the glory of emancipation, and ultimately an historical identity.

When Bradford’s second biography of Tubman was issued, the country was already deep into reconciliation. But much of the power of the original biography’s detail and blunt commentary about slavery were muted in deference to a less hostile south. Bradford, for the first time, includes “merry little darkies” on Tubman’s master’s plantation; she also feels compelled to testify that “their love for their offspring is quite equal to that of the ‘superior race’,” and that Tubman’s family “seem to be peculiarly intelligent, upright and religious people, and to have a strong feeling of family affection. There may be many among the colored race like them; certainly all should not be judged by the idle, miserable darkies who have swarmed about Washington and other cities since the War.”¹⁰¹

Bradford’s original attempt to confront the South’s legacy of violence and oppression through the inclusion of the “Essay on Woman Whipping” in *Scenes* was cast

aside when the essay was eliminated from the second edition. Tubman's woodcut image in her Union garb and gun, featured prominently as the frontispiece to her 1869 biography, is gone. Several tales are altered and exaggerated for comic or dramatic affect. Bradford also uses more dialect when quoting Tubman, which is what white audiences had come to expect from an illiterate black woman, no matter how famous or accomplished she may have been.

For instance, in her first book, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman, Bradford quotes Tubman's description of her mixed emotions upon arriving in Philadelphia with simple directness:

'I had crossed the line. I was *free*; but there was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land; and my home, after all, was down in Maryland; because my father, my mother, my brothers, and sisters, and friends were there. But I was free, and *they* should be free. I would make a home in the North and bring them there, God helping me. Oh, how I prayed then,' she said; 'I said to de Lord, 'I'm gwine to hole stiddy on to *you*, an' I *know* you'll see me through'.'¹⁰²

But when Bradford rewrote the biography, she changed this quote, embellishing and inserting more dialect:

I had crossed de line of which I had so long been dreaming. I was free; but dere was no one to welcome me to de land of freedom, I was a stranger in a strange land, and my home after all was down in de old cabin quarter, wid de ole folks, and my brudders and sisters. But to dis solemn resolution I came; I was free, and dey should be free also; I would make a home for dem in de North, and de Lord helping me, I would bring dem all dere. Oh, how I prayed den, lying all alone on de cold, damp ground; 'Oh, dear Lord,' I said, 'I haint got no friend but *you*. Come to my help, Lord, for I'm in trouble!'"¹⁰³

Bradford also rewrote the story of Joe Bailey, the runaway slave who had escaped from a master on the Eastern Shore who offered a fifteen hundred dollar reward for Joe's capture. By 1886, Bradford has changed this to \$2,000.¹⁰⁴ Instead of using the word "whipping" and "whipped" to describe the lashes Joe received at the hands of his cruel

owner, the 1886 version referred only to “a good licking,” and a “flogging.”¹⁰⁵ She also eliminated the threat the master gave to Joe if he did not submit; the earlier version read, “the first lesson my niggers have to learn is that I am *master*, and that they are not to resist or refuse to obey anything I tell 'em to do. So the first thing they've got to do, is to be whipped; if they resist, they got it all the harder; and so I'll go on, till I kill 'em, but they've got to give up at last, and learn that I'm master.”¹⁰⁶ By 1886, the cruelty of the master is much reduced; “the first lesson my niggers have to learn is that I am master and they belong to me, and are never to resist anything I order them to do. So I always begin by giving them a good licking.”¹⁰⁷

In the 1869 version, Bradford wrote that Harriet had “heard them read from one paper that the reward offered was \$12,000,” but that a recent article claimed “*forty thousand dollars* was not too great a reward for the Maryland slaveholders to offer for her.”¹⁰⁸ By 1886, Bradford makes no mention of the \$12,000, but claims, rather, that “a reward of \$40,000 was offered by the slave-holders of the region from whence so many slaves had been spirited away, for the head of the woman who appeared so mysteriously, and enticed away their property... Our sagacious heroine has been in the car... and has heard this advertisement, which was posted over her head, read by others of the passengers.”¹⁰⁹

Why did Bradford change these stories? There may be several reasons, the least of which was perhaps Bradford's own desire to rewrite what she had thought was an already inadequate biography. With a second chance to insert more of her own style and personal vision into the story, Bradford may have thought it was an opportunity to redeem herself. In doing so, she omitted important details from the first edition, added additional

descriptive material for literary affect, and even sensationalized certain stories for dramatic purposes. None of this advanced a more accurate picture of Tubman's life and accomplishments. Ultimately, Bradford missed an opportunity to bring to life more details of Tubman's narrative.¹¹⁰

Oddly Sarah Bradford predicted the ultimate reformulation of Tubman's narrative and, ultimately African American history and memory as well. In the closing pages of Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman, she wrote that while she hoped the "fictions in which they [Southerners] are enbalm'd [sic] will be lost in the better coming era of morals and letters," she was prescient when she wrote, "by the time the South has been overflowed and regenerated by a beneficent inundation of Northern "carpet baggers," with Yankee capital and enterprise, it will be forgotten that a race capable of the crimes referred to in the preceding story [Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman], ever existed."¹¹¹

While Bradford did not go so far as to portray Tubman's life in slavery with the nostalgic imagery of a Old South, with its abundant plantation culture, teeming with happy, helpful slaves and contented, genteel masters, she did privilege certain aspects of Tubman's life and reformulate her image of Tubman to suit a nation more disposed to conciliatory stories of slavery, the war and its aftermath. Her modified version was the one that, for generations of Americans, both white and black, would reconfigure the narrative of Harriet Tubman into a more useable past that suited a variety of racial, gender and class ideologies, and it is this 1886 biography that has remained the reprint of choice since the turn of the last century.

In spite of its failings, Harriet Tubman, The Moses of Her People probably provided Tubman with a little more income to help with her ever present needs for money. It

brought her back into the public sphere, a place she seems to have enjoyed. She traveled to Boston, where Franklin Sanborn saw to it that she sat for a new photograph, possibly to sell with copies of her new biography.¹¹² An article appeared in the *Boston Sunday Herald* announcing Tubman's presence in the city, drumming up interest in her new narrative. Bradford did not take any payment for her authorship, but she did, apparently, take it upon herself to dole out the funds when she thought Tubman needed it most. While this may have been exceedingly frustrating to Tubman, it may have been in her best interests; many people throughout the years expressed exasperation with Tubman's preference to give her money away to others, rather than provide for her own needs. Tubman was hoping, it seems, to start a hospital to care for the sick and lame. "Her own sands are nearly run," Bradford wrote of Tubman, "but she hopes, 'ere she goes home, to see this work, a hospital, well under way. Her last breath and her last efforts will be spent in the cause of those for whom she has already risked so much."¹¹³ Over the next twenty years of her life, Tubman would remain more public oriented, using the same strategies to raise money and awareness that had worked so well for her before and after the Civil War, and she would share considerably in the fashioning of her own historical image and legacy.

CHAPTER TWELVE NOTES

¹ Frank C. Drake, "The Moses of Her People. Amazing Life Work of Harriet Tubman," *New York Herald*, New York, Sept. 22, 1907.

² Sarah H. Bradford, Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman. (Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 1869). 7.

³ "Manuscript History Concerning the Pension Claim of Harriet Tubman." HR 55A-D1 Papers Accompanying the Claim of Harriet Tubman. Record Group 233. National Archives. Washington, D.C.

⁴ "For Services as Scout." Harriet Tubman Collection. Tubman Home Museum. Auburn, NY.

⁵ "Scouts, Spies and Guides, Entries 31 and 36; and Secret Service Accounts, Entry 95." Records of the Provost Marshall General's Bureau (Civil War). Record Group 110. National Archives. Washington, D.C. I am indebted to Mike Musick at the National Archives for finding this information for me.

⁶ Mr. McDougall, *Harriet Tubman - H.R. 2711*, House of Representatives of the United States, 43rd Congress, H.R. 2711.; and Gerry W. Hazelton, *Harriet Tubman - H.R. 3786*, House of Representatives of the United States, 43rd Congress, H.R. 3786.

⁷ "[Tubman-Davis Wedding]," *Auburn Morning News*, Auburn, NY., March 19, 1869.

⁸ See 1870 U.S. Census, Town of Fleming, Cayuga County, NY. William Hedgar is listed as owning a brick business in the same neighborhood. George Dale, another runaway from Maryland, worked in this brickyard, and also lived in Fleming with his family, not too far from Tubman's residence. It appears that several brick makers and masons lived in dwellings next to and near Tubman in Fleming.

⁹ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Reel 1, Box 3 folder d2. NYPL - Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. New York. Letter, Bowley to Conrad, August 15, 1939.

¹⁰ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, October 20, 1869." Garrison Family papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

¹¹ "Interview with Helen W. Tatlock [Mrs. William Tatlock]." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York.

¹² "Tatlock Interview."

¹³ "Letter, Alice Lucas Brickler to Earl Conrad." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: The New York Public Library. New York.

¹⁴ "Statement of Mrs. Florence Carter." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York.

¹⁵ Elliot G. Storke, Jas. H. Smith, The History of Cayuga County. (Syracuse, N.Y.: D. Mason & Co., 1879). 211-212. The first minister of this church was Jacob Mowbry, also from Maryland.

¹⁶ "Diary of Martha Coffin Wright." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA. See entries for May 1870, for example. "Harriet Tubman's Tribute [Theodore Pomeroy's Funeral]," *Obituary Scrapbook, Seward House Collection*, Auburn, N.Y., ca. March 25, 1905. Theodore Pomeroy was David Wright's law partner, who later became a U.S. Congressman, and then later, mayor of Auburn. See Michael Cuddy, Jr., Hizzoners: A Brief Account of the Mayors of the City of Auburn. (Auburn, N.Y.: Jacobs Press, 1995). 19-21.

¹⁷ See "Martha Wright Diary." Entry, January 14, 1871; and, Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: J.J. Little & Co., 1901). 144-145.

¹⁸ See, for example, 1870 U.S. Census, Auburn, N.Y., Cayuga County.; and Auburn City directories.

¹⁹ William Still, The Underground Railroad. (1871; Reprint, Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, Inc., 1970). v-viii.

²⁰ Still, Underground Railroad. 305.

²¹ Still, Underground Railroad. 306.

²² Still, Underground Railroad. 306

²³ Philip S. Foner, and Robert James Branham, ed., Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787-1900 (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998).

²⁴ Still, Underground Railroad. 305

²⁵ Still, Underground Railroad. 797

²⁶ Still, Underground Railroad. 783. Still wrote several lengthy biographical sketches of white and black abolitionists and Underground Railroad agents. The omission of

Tubman's history is a striking example of the complexities of gender and class within the post emancipation African American community.

²⁷ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Fanny Pelham Wright, November 29, 1871." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.. "I think Harriet Tubman's mother might as well have crossed to the shining shore, with her husband."

²⁸ Rebecca Green. "History of Harriet Tubman and Her Brick House," Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: 1998.

²⁹ Green. "Tubman Home,"

³⁰ "The Gold Swindle and the Greenback Robbery," *Auburn Daily Bulletin*, Auburn, N.Y., October 6, 1873.

³¹ "Swindle."

³² "Swindle."

³³ "Swindle."

³⁴ "Swindle."

³⁵ "Swindle."

³⁶ "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, October 2, 1873." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

³⁷ "Letter, M.C.W. To E.W.G., Oct. 2, 1873."

³⁸ "Shimer's Career Is at an End," *The Auburn Bulletin*, Auburn, N.Y., October 8, 1896.

³⁹ "Shimer." Shimer was described as "industrious, miserly," and eccentric. He possessed "unflagging devotion to one object and that the accumulation of wealth – wealth above all else." He was not charitable, apparently, and he lived sparingly, spending "the small amount requisite for the purchase of the bare necessities of life." He was considered "a detriment to Auburn" by the time he died. As a landlord of many properties throughout Auburn, he was criticized for years for never repairing or keeping up his properties, instead leaving them to deteriorate into complete disrepair. Given the complexity of Shimer's relationship to the city by the time he died in 1896, one wonders what Wright's true motivations may have been in suggesting Shimer to Tubman.

⁴⁰ "Shimer."

⁴¹ "Swindle."

⁴² "Swindle."

⁴³ "Swindle."

⁴⁴ "Swindle."

⁴⁵ "Swindle."

⁴⁶ "Swindle." Martha Coffin Wright speculated that Tubman had been chloroformed. See "Letter, Martha Coffin Wright to Ellen Wright Garrison, October 9, 1873." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁴⁷ "Swindle."

⁴⁸ "Letter, M.C.Wright To E.W.Garrison, Oct. 2, 1873."

⁴⁹ "Shimer."

⁵⁰ "Shimer." ; and "Swindle." ; also "Letter, M.C.Wright To E.W.Garrison Oct. 9, 1873."

⁵¹ "Swindle."

⁵² "Swindle."

⁵³ "Swindle."

⁵⁴ "Swindle."

⁵⁵ "Swindle." See also, "Diary October 4, 1873." Florence W. Hazzard Papers. Collection # 2516-2. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University. Ithaca, NY.

⁵⁶ "Howland Oct. 4, 1873."

⁵⁷ Jean Humez, Harriet Tubman: The Life and Life Stories. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, forthcoming 2003).

⁵⁸ See "Letter, M.C.W. To E.W.G., Oct. 2, 1873." ; "Letter, M.C.W. To E.W.G. Oct. 9, 1873." ; and "Letter Fragment, Lucretia Coffin Mott to Martha Coffin Wright, October 1873." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁵⁹ Andrew Boyd, Boyd's Auburn City Directory, 1875-76. (Auburn, NY: Andrew Boyd Publisher, 1875).

⁶⁰ New York Census, 1875, Cayuga County, NY.

⁶¹ "Swindle."

⁶² "Wage Book." Osborne Family Papers. Syracuse University Library. Syracuse, NY.

⁶³ Gertie is listed as adopted in the New York 1875 census in Tubman's household. In the 1880 Federal Census she is listed as Nelson and Harriet's daughter. Gertie eventually married a man named Watson around 1900. She disappears from the record after the 1920 census, where she appears to be living in New York City. There is little documentary evidence of Gertie's life; if there is an actual adoption record, it is permanently closed per New York State laws.

⁶⁴ Cayuga County Historical Society Society, "Record of Current Events - Local Necrology," *Collections of Cayuga County Historical Society, Auburn, N.Y.* 8 1890, (1890):

⁶⁵ "Letter, Alice Lucas Brickler to Earl Conrad, July 19, 1939." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York.

⁶⁶ Or Edith.

⁶⁷ See 1880 U.S. Census, Cayuga County, N.Y.; see also Auburn City directories for 1875-1880.

⁶⁸ "Harriet Tubman," *Boston Sunday Herald*, Boston, October 31, 1886.

⁶⁹ 1880 U.S. Census, Cayuga County, Town of Fleming, 4.

⁷⁰ There is great confusion over this Masonic symbol. It supposedly contained the Masonic Lodge number 741. No additional research has been done on this lodge or why the symbol would have been installed on Tubman's house. Green. "Tubman Home," It is likely that given Tubman and Davis's own brickmaking operation during the 1870s, and their close relationship to the other brick making businesses in the area, the local masons, or brickmakers, may have played a critical role in the building of the residence. The Masonic symbol may have been a tribute to them and their secret lodge. Thanks to Beth Crawford, Bonnie Ryan, and Doug Armstrong for informing me of the discovery of a burned layer surrounding the existing Tubman residence in Auburn, indicating the brick building was constructed on top of the original site of the frame structure.

⁷¹ No mortgage records have been located to indicate that Tubman borrowed money to rebuild the home, perhaps suggesting a community effort to rebuild and thereby reducing the financial obligation on Tubman.

⁷² "Harriet Tubman's Hogs," *The Evening Auburnian*, Auburn, N.Y., July 11, 1884.

⁷³ "Hogs."

⁷⁴ "Hogs." Interestingly, the subtitle to the article reads "Losses of Swine by the Lady Who Did Business with Mr. Shimer," indicating a long local memory of the gold swindle in 1873. The article concludes with the following comment: "No doubt Mr. Shimer will sympathize deeply with [Harriet's] losses, because she at one time is said to have caused him to be an object of public sympathy to the amount of \$2,000 good money." The newspaper also noted that garbage was piling up in "Harriet's garden" because the hogs no longer ate the refuse. There is no mention in the article of the possibility that the hogs may have been poisoned deliberately, or that they may have died of some other disease.

⁷⁵ "Letter, Eliza Wright Osborne to Emily Osborne Harris, January 29, 1884." Osborne Family Papers. George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, Syracuse University. Syracuse, N.Y.

⁷⁶ "Letter, E.W.Osborne To E.O.Harris, Jan. 29, 1884."

⁷⁷ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. (pp. 147-148. "... a drefful t'ing was happenin' somewha', de ground was openin', an' de houses were fallin' in, and de people bein' killed faster 'n dey was in de wah – faster 'n dey was in de wah."

⁷⁸ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. 148.

⁷⁹ "Considerable Amount of Excitement," *Auburn Daily Citizen*, Auburn, N.Y., October 13, 1884.

⁸⁰ "Moses Stewart." Cayuga County Court Records. Records Retention Center. Auburn, N.Y. Moses Stewart was convicted and sentenced to 20 days in jail and a fine of ten dollars. He was released on October 29, 1884. The court record lists Moses as married and the father of four children. Moses disappears from Auburn public records near this date; the identities of his wife and children remain unknown.

⁸¹ "Excitement."

⁸² While it is not my intention to minimize Tubman's spirituality by reducing it to merely a manifestation of her illness, it is important to view the two, her illness and her spirituality, as perhaps symbiotic.

⁸³ James E. Mason, in Edward U.A. Brooks. Tribute to Harriet Tubman, the Modern Amazon. Auburn, N.Y.: Tubman Home, 1914.

⁸⁴ "To Aunt Harriet," *The Auburn Citizen*, Auburn, NY, March 13, 1913.

⁸⁵ Hilary McD. Beckles, ed., Taking Liberties: Enslaved Women and Antislavery in the Caribbean, Gender and Imperialism (New York: Manchester University Press, 1998). p. 150.

⁸⁶ "Aunt Harriet."

⁸⁷ Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood & Sons, 1886). 6.

⁸⁸ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 7.

⁸⁹ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 7.

⁹⁰ Blight, "Frederick Douglass" 1159.

⁹¹ David W. Blight, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). 135-139.

⁹² Blight, Race. 139.

⁹³ Blight, Race. 171-210. See in particular, pp. 197-199

⁹⁴ Peter Novick, That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). 74

⁹⁵ David W. Blight, "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Struggle for American Historical Memory," in History and Memory in African American Culture, ed. Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Mealley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). 46.

⁹⁶ David W. Blight, "'for Something Beyond the Battlefield': Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for the Memory of the Civil War," *Journal of American History*, March. 1177.

⁹⁷ Blight, "W.E.B. Du Bois." 48.

⁹⁸ Blight, "Frederick Douglass" 1159

⁹⁹ David Lowenthal, The Past Is a Foreign Country. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985). 192.

¹⁰⁰ Blight, "Frederick Douglass" 1163.

¹⁰¹ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 69.

¹⁰² Bradford, Scenes. 20.

¹⁰³ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 31.

¹⁰⁴ See Bradford, Scenes. 31-32, “ ‘Well,’ said Mr. Oliver Johnson, ‘I am glad to see the man whose head is worth fifteen hundred dollars.’ At this Joe's heart sank.” In Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 46, however, she writes, “Mr. Oliver Johnson rose up and exclaimed, ‘Well, Joe, I am glad to see the man who is worth \$2,000 to his master.’ At this Joe's heart sank.”

¹⁰⁵ See Bradford, Scenes. 29. “ ‘Now, Joe, strip and take a whipping!’ ” ; and, “He stripped off his upper clothing, and took his whipping, without a word; but as he drew his clothes up over his torn and bleeding back, he said, ‘Dis is de last!’”; and compare to Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 28, “ ‘Now, Joe, strip, and take a licking.’” And “He stripped off his clothing, and took his flogging without a word, but as he drew his shirt up over his torn and bleeding back, he said to himself: ‘Dis is de first an' de last.’”

¹⁰⁶ Bradford, Scenes. 28-29.

¹⁰⁷ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 41

¹⁰⁸ Bradford, Scenes. 22-23.

¹⁰⁹ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 33-34.

¹¹⁰ For more detail regarding Bradford's, and other biographers', changes and dramatization of Tubman's life story, see James McGowan, *The Harriet Tubman Journal* Vol. 1-3 (1993-1995):

¹¹¹ Bradford, Scenes, 129

¹¹² "Letter, Franklin B. Sanborn to Unknown, Nov. 1, 1886." JohnBrown/Boyd Stutler Collection. West Virginia Division of Culture and History/West Virginia Memory Project. Charleston, WV.

¹¹³ Bradford, Harriet, 1886. 7.

CHAPTER XIII

MOTHER TUBMAN, THE BLACK JOAN OF ARC

With the publication of a second biography of her life, Harriet Tubman, The Moses of Her People, Tubman re-entered the public sphere with renewed vigor, only this time through the haze of the reunification sentiment that now dominated the memory of slavery and the Civil War. Though the second narrative remained focused on her years in slavery, her liberation of herself and others, and her Civil War experiences, it was silent on her post war life. Tubman's support of woman's suffrage remained obscured, and her community activism and humanitarian received only a brief acknowledgement in its introduction.

Tubman's new public activism now focused on woman suffrage. Though she has been long supportive of the movement for women's rights, Tubman's daily struggle for survival had forced her to step back from active participation in the movement since she had first spoken at a suffrage meeting in Boston in 1860.¹ After the Civil War, she had been occupied with supporting relief efforts for the freedmen in the south and maintaining a household full of dependants in Auburn. By the mid 1880s, as an older, and more feeble, woman, showing the effects of decades of poverty and hard labor, Tubman cut a striking image, in sharp counterbalance to the middle class white and black

women who shared the suffrage convention and meeting circuit throughout the 1880s and 1890s.

When interviewed at the turn of the century, Tubman acknowledged that she had been a member of “Miss Anthony’s organization,” the National Woman’s Suffrage Association (NWSA).² Tubman maintained friendships with old guard abolitionists themselves split between two rival suffrage organizations that had emerged when the 15th Amendment of 1870 outlawed voting discrimination against African American men, but failed to provide the same equal rights for women.³ Though Tubman “considered [Frederick Douglass’s] judgment on political matters to be the very best, and she followed him in forming her views,” she may have differed with him on the Amendment. Douglass broke ranks with Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others during the immediate post war period, arguing that black men needed the vote more than women. Supported by many black and white woman suffragists, including Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, Lucy Stone and Anna Blackwell, founders of the American Woman Suffrage Association, Douglass and other prominent male black rights activists successfully sustained Republican efforts to pass the Amendment.⁴ Though he supported universal woman suffrage, Douglass campaigned hard for the Amendment, and he resented Anthony’s and Stanton’s criticism of what he called “a cause not more sacred, [but] certainly more urgent, because it is life and death to the long-enslaved people of this country; and this is: Negro suffrage... considering that white men have been enfranchised always, and colored men have not, the conduct of these white women, whose husbands, fathers and brothers are voters, does not seem generous.”⁵

Tubman may have ultimately favored Anthony's NWSA because of her commitment to an expanded women's rights platform, or perhaps because Anthony lived close by and was supported by longtime Tubman friends Lucretia Mott, Martha Wright, and Eliza Wright Osborne, but it is likely that she reflected a minority view within the black community.⁶ For Tubman, who had led her brothers out of slavery on the Eastern Shore, had counseled John Brown, and had commanded raids and advised Generals during the Civil War, the thought that men should vote "for" her may have been too much to ask.

Tubman frequently attended suffrage meetings in New York and Boston throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and she spoke as often as she could.⁷ In March 1888, Tubman addressed a meeting of suffragists at the "Non-Partisan Society for political education for women," in Auburn.⁸ Asked to speak of her heroic service "in freeing and helping to emancipate her down trodden and emancipated race," Tubman informed the group that she was there not "to teach them but rather to learn and be taught."⁹ At nearly seventy years old, Tubman probably reaped some of the respect young reformers offered aged activists. She "spoke affectionately of her friends of the late war, most of whom have passed away." But she was forceful and to the point when she told her audience of the "brave and fearless deeds of women who sacrificed all for their country and moved in battle when bullets mowed down men." Those women, she told them, "were on the scene to administer to the injured, to bind up their wounds and tend them through weary months of suffering in the army hospitals. If those deeds do not place woman as man's equal, what do?"¹⁰ The story of Tubman's heroic feats recounted a personal and yet collective experience of resistance and liberation that resonated for

African Americans, but these also spoke to late nineteenth-century middle class white women eager for the vote, making Tubman an ideal emblem for woman suffrage.

During the 1880s, as Tubman was re-emerging on the public stage, a new generation of activist women began moving into positions of leadership in the suffrage movement. Some of these younger leaders held views decidedly more racist than those of Anthony's generation. Political expediency and racialized gender expectations combined with these views to silence many African American women suffragists and pushed them aside. For some aging former abolitionists, including Tubman, these younger women needed to be reminded of the moral victories of the preceding generation. During this moment of changing of the guard, Tubman served to reify the abolitionists' glorious pasts and to demonstrate an obligation to give the vote to women, who, in Tubman's words "had suffered enough for it."¹¹

However, as the 1890's wore on, many middle class white women suffragists shied away from support for racial equality. Inevitably, racism reared its ugly head, striking at the heart of the emerging struggles in the 1890s for control of the suffrage movement. For twenty years, efforts to reunite the two factions of the national organizations, the National Woman's Suffrage Association and the American Woman's Suffrage Association, had proved fruitless. By 1891, however, the rift had been repaired enough for the two organizations to form the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Southern women, who up until that time had remained unorganized on the issue, began voicing racist concerns about giving the vote to black women. The National Association modified its arguments to pacify the growing discontent emerging from the increasingly powerful southern groups.¹² Harking back to Henry Blackwell's assurances to the

“Legislatures of the Southern States” in 1867 that white supremacy could be maintained with woman suffrage, the National Association adopted a set of resolutions in 1893 that reiterated this point.¹³ They also began to concede to Southern pressure to support individual state's rights in matters of voting qualifications. For black women this was a painful reminder that powerful state interests that had already ensured that the de facto disfranchisement of black men in much of the South would find support from white women activists.

White racist attitudes created barriers between activists; the call for “sisterhood” rang false in the ears of many black women struggling with both race and gender inequality. As discrimination against African Americans within the movement came to a head in the 1890s, and many disillusioned African American suffragists began forming their own societies and organizations, establishing their own lecture circuits and propaganda campaigns, and issuing their own suffrage and racial uplift literature. Long segregated from many meetings, particularly in the South, African American women became an increasingly problematic presence for the National organization. Black female activists in turn challenged political, economic and social silence. In the mid 1890s, Anna Julia Cooper, black feminist and intellectual, recognized that much equal rights rhetoric encompassed only middle class white women. “The “*all*” will inevitably stick in the throat of the Southern woman. She must be allowed, please, to except the ‘darkey’ from the ‘all’; it is too bitter a pill with black people in it. You must get the Revised Version to put it, “*love all white people as brethren.*”¹⁴

Responding to the racism they confronted in the predominantly white NAWSA, black women founded the National Federation of Afro-American Women in Boston in

1895.¹⁵ In July 1896 the National Federation joined forces with the National League of Colored Women in Washington D.C., to create the National Association of Colored Women.¹⁶ Harriet Tubman was a featured speaker at that first meeting in 1896. *The Woman's Era*, an African American women's newspaper popular from the 1890s, featured Tubman as the first in a series on "Eminent Women." A tribute to her, complete with a picture of her with a shotgun, was featured in the official "souvenir" issue that doubled as a program for the National Federation convention. Calling on "the rising generation" of African American women to "clasp hands with this noble mother of Israel!" the editors of the *Woman's Era* and leaders of the convention urged solidarity "in the benign presence of this great leader, in days and actions that caused strong men to quail, this almost unknown, almost unsung 'Black Joan of Arc.' The primary object of our Federation is to bring our women together, we owe it to our children to uncover from partial oblivion and unconscious indifference the great characters within our ranks. The fact that we know so little that is creditable and truly noble about our own people constitutes one of the saddest and most humiliating phases of Afro-American life."¹⁷

Introduced to the audience at the meeting as "Mother Tubman," Harriet told "a little of her war experience," and with "a strong and musical voice... penetrated every portion of the large auditorium" as she sang a "war melody."¹⁸ She was later asked, as the oldest member attending the meeting, to introduce Ida B. Wells-Barnett's newborn, "Baby Barnett," to the audience, after which Harriet spoke on the topic of "More Homes for our Aged Ones."¹⁹ Donations were made in support of Tubman's Home or hospital in Auburn, and a collection was made to help defray the expenses "of Mother Harriet Tubman during her visit in Washington."²⁰

In November that same year, Susan B. Anthony led Harriet Tubman to the podium at a predominantly white suffrage convention in Rochester, N.Y. She was introduced as the “great Black liberator.” Thunderous applause erupted from the audience. Tubman’s appearance on stage was heralded as the high point of the three-day convention. “With her hand held in Miss Anthony’s, she impressed one with the venerable dignity of her appearance,” the reporter for the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* wrote. The reporter noted that although Tubman’s clothing was “cheap,” and her “face was black, old and wrinkled, and strongly marked with her race characteristics... through it all there shows an honesty and true benevolence of purpose which commanded respect.”²¹ It was probably here that Tubman spoke her most famous words: “I was the conductor on the Underground Railroad for eight years, and I can say what most conductors can’t say - I never ran my train off the track and I never lost a passenger.”²² Nevertheless, Tubman biographer Earl Conrad noted “[i]t was as an Underground Railroad operator and Union fighter that Harriet spoke, but it was as a suffragist that she came to the Rochester meeting.”²³

Though Tubman was enjoying renewed public acclaim by the mid 1890s, she had spent many years in relative obscurity, struggling with personal challenges, private pain, and financial setbacks. On October 18, 1888, Nelson Davis died at the age of forty-five, probably as a result of the ravages of tuberculosis.²⁴ Tubman’s older brother, John, seventy-seven, died the following year.²⁵ It was about this time that Harriet’s younger brother, William Henry, who had been living in Grantham, Ontario, left Canada and moved to Auburn to be near his oldest son, William Henry Stewart Jr., and Harriet. Though he lived with William Jr., for a time on Garrow Street, he eventually moved in

with Harriet on South Street. His other son, John Isaac, also joined his father and brother in Auburn, probably around 1890, after the death of John's Canadian wife, Helena. According to Harkless Bowley, John Isaac's wife, "an Indian girl," sent for Tubman when she lay dying after giving birth to a baby girl, and asked her to take the child and raise her. "Aunt Harriet promise [sic] her she would. She said now I die happy, and passed away."²⁶ Harriet, now seventy years old, brought the child, named Eva Katherine Helena Harriet, to Auburn to live with her and Eva's grandfather, William Henry. John Isaac, however, soon died of unknown causes at Tubman's home on March 2, 1893 at the age of forty, leaving little Eva an orphan.²⁷ He was buried at Fort Hill cemetery next to Nelson Davis. Eva remained in the household with Tubman, one of the constantly changing residents in Tubman's home. Helen Tatlock, a friend and neighbor, recalled Tubman "had a great number of young and old, black and white, all poorer than she. There were children that she brought up... also a blind woman."²⁸ Emma Telford later wrote, perhaps more dramatically, that Tubman's "doors have been open to the needy, the most utterly friendless and helpless of her race. The aged... the babe deserted, the demented, the epileptic, the blind, the paralyzed, the consumptive," who found their way to Tubman's door where she took them in and cared for them.²⁹

Sarah Bradford recalled visiting Tubman one day in early 1901 and finding her "providing for five sick and injured ones. A blind woman came to her door, led by four little children – her husband had turned her out of his house."³⁰ The blind woman soon gave birth to a fifth child. Tatlock told Conrad that Tubman also "took care of an incorrigible white woman who... was frequently in local difficulties." This woman had a child, and "had been in jail."³¹ As Tubman aged, work became more difficult; she lived

day to day by selling chickens and eggs, and sometimes a little milk. Her brother William contributed to the household finances, too, but donations of food and money from friends and relatives helped make ends meet.³²

A Civil War pension would have helped her financial situation, but the government had been unwilling to recognize her service. But Harriet could not be swayed; she continued to press her claim for her war service as a nurse and a spy. In 1887 she petitioned Congress to release the file containing her application for back pay, with the intention, it seems, to reinstate her petition once again.³³ No action was taken, however, and after her husband's death, Tubman applied for a widow's pension under the Dependent Pension Act of 1890. Designed to provide benefits to any disabled war veterans or their widows and dependents, the new pension act greatly expanded the original pension plan that provided compensation only to veterans suffering with disabilities directly related to war service.³⁴ Within a month of the enactment of the Pension Act in June 1890, Tubman filed her first claim; five years later, on October 16, 1895, she was finally granted an \$8.00 per month pension as the widow of Nelson Davis.³⁵ She received a lump sum retroactive payment of approximately \$500 in late October 1895, covering the sixty some odd months from the time she first applied for the widow's pension until it was finally approved.³⁶

The lengthy process to obtain a widow's pension must have become increasingly frustrating for Tubman. Tubman's right to Davis's pension would seem incontrovertible. But the bureaucratic process, which all widows had to negotiate, worked against African American soldiers and their dependents in ways that it did not for white applicants. In the case of Nelson Davis, as for many other former slaves who joined the Union army,

his identity was at first difficult to ascertain in the military records because he had changed his name after the war from Nelson Charles to Nelson Davis. When Tubman first applied for the pension under the name Nelson Davis, it was denied because the claims office could not find a Nelson Davis on the muster rolls of the 8th USCT. It took at least eighteen months before the mix-up was straightened out, and then it was another three years before all the supporting documentation, including sworn testimonies of relatives, friends, fellow soldiers from the 8th USCT, and Auburn lawyers and other officials, was gathered to the satisfaction of the Pension Bureau. After it was determined that Nelson Charles, who had served with the 8th USCT, was the same person as Nelson Davis, the Bureau required Tubman to provide documentation of their marriage, obtain sworn testimony that her first husband, John Tubman, had died before she married Davis, and demonstrate her worthiness to receive the pension. The personal reputations of her witnesses, including family members William Henry and Margaret Stewart Lucas, friends such as Thornton Newton and Charles Peterson, and fellow soldiers Edgar J. Fryman and Dorsey Brainard, among others also had to be verified, making the process expensive and time consuming. The documentation seems excessive, but as historian Don Shaffer has shown, this bureaucratic process was typical, particularly for African American soldiers whose identities were often difficult to ascertain.³⁷

The process might have taken even longer had not New York Congressman Sereno E. Payne began to pressure the pension claims board. When Tubman was finally paid in October 1895, Payne still viewed it as inadequate and a poor substitute for a pension in her own right and the official recognition of her service that would come with it. In December 1897, Payne introduced a bill to Congress, “granting a pension to Harriet

Tubman Davis, late a nurse in the United States Army,” at the rate of \$25 per month.³⁸ A petition was circulated around Auburn, supporting Payne and urging him to “bring up the matter again and press it to a final and successful termination.”³⁹ Finally, in January 1899, a report on the bill was filed, supporting her claim for a \$25 per month pension. Objections were voiced, however, arguing that giving Tubman a \$25 pension per month as a nurse far exceeded pension payments to other Civil War nurses. A compromise was reached, and she was awarded twenty dollars per month: eight dollars per month as the widow of Nelson Davis and twelve dollars for her services as a nurse. This increase in monthly pension payments brought her closer to the twenty-five dollars she sought in monetary terms, but it did not bring any further acknowledgment from the government for her military service as a scout and spy.⁴⁰ Some of Tubman’s friends felt that Payne “might have pressed the matter more than he did.”⁴¹ By 1899, however, Tubman was nearly eighty years old, and Payne may have decided that, rather than fight in Congress to get official recognition for Tubman’s service as a scout and a spy, and that it was better to get her paid immediately for her nursing services.

Throughout this period, Tubman was deeply ensconced in the spiritual and social world of the A.M.E. Zion Church in Auburn. For many black women of the late 19th century, the church served as not only a spiritual sanctuary, but also a social and political haven where they could forge strong networks in support of racial, gender, economic and educational advancement.⁴² Tubman was no exception. In 1891, the Thompson Memorial A.M.E. Zion church moved from its location on Washington Street to a new church on Parker Street. Tubman apparently pledged \$500 for its construction, though how she paid for it remains a mystery.⁴³ She stayed actively involved in community

work, raising money and clothing for needy families. "I have been appointed by the first M.E. and the A.M.E. Churches of Auburn," Tubman told Mary Wright in a dictated letter, "to collect clothes for the destitute colored children and the things which you sent are very acceptable."⁴⁴ She had been trying unsuccessfully for years to open a home for destitute and old African Americans, but the lack of funds prevented her from successfully opening a facility, though her house remained a refuge. Tubman "is as busy as ever going about doing good to every body - her house is filled with 'odds and ends' of society - and to many are outcast," Jane Kellogg wrote to Ednah Cheney in 1894.⁴⁵ Kellogg indicated that Tubman was having trouble raising the requisite funds, but that she "is not discouraged but is working along with that object still in view."⁴⁶ Cheney quickly sent along twenty dollars to Tubman.⁴⁷

Tubman's dream of an institution dedicated to caring for poor and sick African Americans started to become a reality in the spring of 1895. A twenty-five acre lot adjacent to her property in Fleming was put up for auction. Tubman bid on it, and to everyone's surprise, won it. On the day of the auction, Tubman "appeared with very little money," but was determined to have the land and the buildings she would need to house her infirmary and shelter for the sick and homeless.⁴⁸ "There was all white folks but me there," she later told Bradford, "and there I was like a blackberry in a pail of milk."⁴⁹ When the auction was over and they called out for the high bidder, Tubman stepped forward shouting, "Harriet Tubman," had bought the property. Asked how she could possibly pay for the land, she responded, "I'm going home to tell the Lord Jesus all about it."⁵⁰

Friends and supporters contributed \$250, and she obtained a mortgage of \$1000.⁵¹ Within months, she convened a group A.M.E. Zion ministers with whom she was familiar, and incorporated her property into the Harriet Tubman Home, Inc.⁵² Because of the substantial debt encumbering the property, Tubman was unable to use the buildings as she had hoped because she lacked the requisite funds to run them. So, she rented out the buildings and land and “kept needy persons in her own house.”⁵³

Tubman set about fundraising immediately. She sent a letter to Mary Wright in Syracuse, requesting money to help her pay for another edition of Bradford’s Harriet, The Moses of Her People. She told Wright that she could raise fifty of the one hundred dollars needed to publish another five hundred copies, but that she hoped that Ednah Cheney, Frank Sanborn and others could help raise the additional fifty. “If they will help me the money they can hold the books until I can sell enough to pay them back,” she offered, noting that “Miss Cheney has done very well by me and I do not wish to ask for money [but] if through her influence I can get the friends to help me I shall be ever thankful. My home is incorporated [sp] for an asylum for aged colored people that will hold the mortgage and I won’t be trouble[d] now.”⁵⁴ Lillie B. Chase Wyman wrote an article about Tubman for the *New England Magazine* in March 1896; another in *The Chautauquan* by Rosa Belle Holt soon followed that. Both relied heavily on Bradford’s work, though both added material gleaned from personal interviews with Tubman.⁵⁵ Both mention her poverty, and the numerous sick and impoverished African Americans she was caring for in her own home, noting she “never begs,” but receives occasional aid from neighbors and friends, gently suggesting Tubman could use more help.⁵⁶

Despite her physical and financial limitations, Tubman continued to frequent suffrage meetings in New York, Boston, and Washington. She traveled to Boston often, probably to visit family (Elijah Stewart had moved there around 1890), friends from Maryland, and her former abolitionist associates and their children.⁵⁷ Because she could neither read nor write, Tubman “paid no attention to time-tables.” She would, apparently, go to the train station in Auburn and “sit and wait for the first train that would take her easterly to Boston.”⁵⁸ During the 1890s and early 1900s, Tubman made many trips to Boston for a variety of occasions, the least of which was suffrage meetings, although the settlement of her nephew Elijah in Boston may have made it easier for her to go and stay there more often during this time period.

In April 1897, the *Woman's Journal*, the white suffrage movement's official newspaper, reported several receptions in Tubman's honor in Boston, sponsored by former white abolitionists and current suffragists, including Ednah Cheney.⁵⁹ Yet, Tubman, so celebrated and honored over the weeks following her arrival there, had to sell a cow in order to pay for her train ticket to Boston.⁶⁰ She was feted at the offices of William Lloyd Garrison, Jr., who was offering the latest edition of her biography for sale.⁶¹ Tubman also visited with Sanborn and the Garrison children, among others, and spoke at the Old South Meeting House on Washington Street along with other aging former anti-slavery warriors later that summer.⁶² In August she met with Wilbur Siebert in Cambridge, where she was staying with Dr. Harriet Cobb. Siebert was compiling evidence for his lengthy volume on the Underground Railroad.⁶³ Though Tubman was “considerably aged and worn,” he wrote, “her mind was still clear.”⁶⁴ He noted at that time that she would often doze off at “frequent intervals” of every half hour or so for a

few minutes, then regain consciousness and carry on “without losing the thread of the conversation.”⁶⁵ Tubman’s fame traveled overseas; Queen Victoria read Tubman’s narrative, and being “pleased with it,” sent Tubman a silver medal, which commemorated “the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897.”⁶⁶ Apparently, the Queen also invited Tubman to her “birthday party,” but Tubman regretted that she “didn’t know enough to go,” never mind that she could not have afforded it.⁶⁷

As Tubman’s poverty remained a constant in her life, so did the terrible headaches from her childhood head injury. Unable to cope with the pain any longer, Tubman endured brain surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital sometime in the late 1890s.⁶⁸ On a visit to Samuel Hopkins’s home, Tubman told him of the ordeal she had endured, after he had asked about her shaved head (probably beneath her the scarf and hat she usually wore).

When I was in Boston I walked out one day, I saw a great big building, I asked a man what it was, and he said it was a hospital. So I went right in, and I saw a young man there, and I said, ‘Sir, are you a doctor?’ and he said he was; then I said ‘Sir, do you think you could cut my head open?’ ... Then I told him the whole story, and how my head was giving me a powerful sight of trouble lately, with achin’ and buzzin’, so I couldn’t get no sleep at night. And he said ‘Lay right down on this here table,’ and I lay down. ‘Didn’t he give you anything to deaden the pain, Harriet?’ No sir; I just lay down like a lamb before the slaughter, and he sawed open my skull, and raised it up, and now it feels more comfortable. ‘Did you suffer much?’ Yes, sir, it hurt, of course; but I got up and put on my bonnet and started to walk home, but legs kind of give out under me, and they sent for a ambulance and sent me home.⁶⁹

Though Harriet remained quite active, she had become quite feeble, and many visitors and friends feared she was close to death many times. In November 1899, Agnes Garrison, who was spending time in Auburn visiting with her aunt, Eliza Wright Osborne, encouraged Tubman to tell “stories of her youth which a stenographer took

down as best she could,” though it was “impossible to unravel the chronology.”⁷⁰ Perhaps with an idea to publish another account of Tubman’s life, Agnes and Eliza invited Tubman back. “We had another bout with Harriet yesterday... she got warmed up to her narrative yesterday and acted out parts of it, crawling on the floor, gesticulating and singing one of the old songs in a curious, nasal, mournful voice.”⁷¹ According to Agnes, Tubman, nearly eighty, was then caring for “the three children she has adopted ... two half white... and one little boy is half Indian and half Spanish.”⁷² In spite of her struggles, she continued to take in helpless and destitute people, perhaps confident that her friends in Auburn would continue to provide for her in times of greatest need.⁷³

In 1901, Bradford reissued Harriet, The Moses of Her People, adding twenty-one additional pages of biographical material that Bradford had not included in earlier editions of Tubman’s narrative. Some of this material may have come from notes taken at earlier dates, though Bradford states that she had recently spent time with Tubman, who relayed new stories that she had included in the new edition. This also made the book a little more appealing to purchase, though Bradford was apparently criticized for charging one dollar for the book, though she felt “it should be looked upon as charity.”⁷⁴ Bradford had just visited with Harriet (probably May 1901) and found her “in deplorable condition, a pure wreck... & surrounded by a set of beggars who I fear *fleece* her of everything sent her.” She told Sanborn that she would keep the money she gets for Tubman and pay her bills as needed. She hoped Tubman could be placed in a home where she “would be well cared for... but she will not leave her beloved darkies.”⁷⁵ Emily Howland made a great effort to sell the new edition of Harriet’s narrative, noting in her diary the many copies she purchased for resale or as gifts for appreciative friends.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, Tubman seems to have recovered enough to attend numerous suffrage, church, and community meetings in New York and Boston. Late November 1902, while attending a suffrage meeting at Eliza Wright Osborne's home in Auburn, Susan B. Anthony met again with Harriet; they had not seen each other for some time, perhaps since the earlier suffrage meeting in Rochester in 1896. Anthony would later write, "[t]his most wonderful woman - *Harriet Tubman* - is still alive. I saw her but the other day at the beautiful home of Eliza Wright Osborne, daughter of Martha Coffin Wright, in company with Elizabeth Smith Miller, the only daughter of Gerrit Smith, Miss Emily Howland, Rev. Anna Howard Shaw and Mrs. Ella Wright Garrison, daughter of Martha C. Wright and the wife of William Lloyd Garrison, Jr. All of us were visiting at the Osborne's, a real love feast of the few that are left and here came *Harriet Tubman*!"⁷⁷

The financial weight of her properties had long been an overwhelming burden for Tubman to manage. Her dreams of an independent infirmary and home for aged blacks faltered due to lack of funds, and she continued to care for people in her home. At the second meeting of the National Association of Colored Women, held in Chicago in August 1899, Tubman offered her twenty-five acre property to the organization, hoping that they would be able to carry on her vision for a home for people of color. The organization thanked Tubman for her offer, but declined to accept it because the property was encumbered by a mortgage.⁷⁸ At one point Tubman had to sell her cows to pay the taxes on the properties.⁷⁹ During 1902 she signed over the deed to the A.M.E. Zion Church, hoping that they could fulfill her dream of establishing a home for aged and sick people of color.

In early 1903, the transfer of the deed was deemed defective, and Tubman was asked to transfer title once again, but she refused. Apparently, due to her own misgivings, perhaps, and pressure from “white friends [who] were bitterly opposed to her deeding the property” to the church, Tubman was having second thoughts. Why her “white friends” would have tried to dissuade her from doing this is unknown, though they may have felt that, given her situation, she could have sold the property rather than give it away. But Tubman held fast to her vision for a home. She could not raise the money to properly operate the home, and she may have recognized that a larger institution such as the church was one of her few alternatives. She finally acquiesced and formally transferred the property to the A.M.E. Church on June 11, 1903.⁸⁰

The church, as it turned out, had bigger and more expanded plans for the property. Though Tubman deeded the property to the church, she retained a life interest, with responsibility for taxes, insurance, and maintenance while collecting the rents.⁸¹ The church assumed the mortgage obligations on the property, which included a \$371 payment to Harriet’s brother, William Henry.⁸² The church immediately set about raising funds to support the opening of an official home for the aged, with a future plan of establishing “a school of domestic science where girls may be taught the various branches of industrial education.”⁸³ Whether this was also part of Tubman’s vision is not known; her dedication to establishing a hospital or infirmary, as well as a home for indigent people of color, never changed or nor wavered, so it is possible that this plan for an industrial school was not in keeping with Tubman’s hopes. This was the era of Booker T. Washington’s greatest influence among both blacks and whites concerned with African American education. During this time period, Booker T. Washington, a former

slave like Harriet, argued that vocational training for people of color was far more realistic and appropriate than a purely academic education. As one of the most prominent and powerful black men in the country, his vision permeated programs and institutions for African Americans across the country, and it seems Auburn and the A.M.E. Zion church were no exception. Noting that the concept of an industrial school for girls “is particularly popular with the white people in this western part of the state,” the church seemed to be gearing its fundraising efforts toward the white community.⁸⁴ Not all African Americans agreed with this ideal of education for African Americans; W.E.B. DuBois, a prominent black intellectual, argued against industrial training. He believed that post-secondary education was the key to success, particularly for the African American community. Tubman’s opinions on this subject remain unknown, although years later Francis Smith would recall that Tubman was interested in “higher education.”⁸⁵

The Harriet Tubman Home for Aged and Infirm Negroes was not officially opened until 1908; the church continued to generate interest in the project, though the process to raise funds was slow. Tubman, in the meantime, became disillusioned by the administration of the Home and “broke off active participation in its management.”⁸⁶ She complained that “when I give the home over to Zion Church what you suppose they done? Why, they make a rule that nobody should come in without they have a hundred dollars. Now I wanted to make a rule that nobody should come in unless they didn’t have no money at all.”⁸⁷ Harriet reconciled with the board, however, but the entrance fee remained in effect.⁸⁸

Throughout the early 1900s, many articles about Tubman appeared in national and local newspapers, possibly as a direct result of the church's efforts to promote interest in the Home and solicit funds for its operations. In 1907, an article about Harriet's life appeared in the *New York Herald*.⁸⁹ Quoting Samuel Hopkins's introductory note in Bradford's *Harriet*, the article equated Tubman to Joan of Arc; "there is not a trace in her countenance of intelligence or courage, but seldom has there been placed in any woman's hide a soul moved by a higher impulse, a purer benevolence, a more dauntless resolution, a more passionate love of freedom. This poor, ignorant, common looking black woman was fully capable of acting the part of Joan d'Arc."⁹⁰ This "poor, ignorant, common looking" imagery belies Tubman's intellectual development and her evolving confidence in her own abilities, and demonstrates a failure to grasp the substance of Tubman. But it served a valuable purpose; it probably elicited valuable funds from a white public comfortable with such paternalistic images of black women and men. Later, another story appeared about Tubman in the *New York Sun*.⁹¹ Heraldizing her great achievements, the article claimed she was the "founder of the Underground Railroad," ratcheting up the iconography which would remain part of Tubman's image, albeit sorely inaccurate, until the present day.

Some of the press attention brought unintended consequences. Tubman's public profile, now much higher, left her vulnerable to opportunists who may have seen her as an easy target. Playing on her sympathies to shelter anyone in need, Tubman was robbed twice. In August, or thereabouts, 1905, a man came to her house looking for shelter. She became frightened when she realized he had a gun, and stayed awake all night watching him. Her fears were realized when he demanded money from her; she had none and had

to borrow five dollars from a friend to pay him. "He scorned so small a sum," Tubman later told Emily Howland. Harriet must have confronted this scenario before; she was afraid to tell her brother, William Henry, "he was in the house."⁹² Perhaps he had warned her to be more cautious about the characters she allowed into her home. This time she was lucky to have lost only five dollars. Her friend Emily Howland was not so lucky. The man found his way to Emily Howland's home, telling her that Tubman had sent him with word that Howland would help him. He told her he had fled lynchers in North Carolina, who had killed his sisters and shot at him, leaving two bullets in his back. Two days later, Howland discovered she had been duped by a "highway robber," to the tune of \$585.00.⁹³ Once again, Tubman's reputation had been used to take advantage of some of her wealthier friends.

On balance, though, more public attention brought greater benefits than problems. More articles appeared locally over the following years, highlighting the black community's efforts to raise money to help refurbish and decorate the Home with new furniture for the inmates, as well as raise money for basic operating expenses.⁹⁴ The Home officially opened in June 1908; tours were given of the Home's facilities, showing the beds, linens and other supplies, which had been successfully procured through the efforts of the local black community. The celebration included a parade down South Street, a band concert, a reception, and a dance.⁹⁵ Representatives from Central New York churches, local officials and board members, and representatives from the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs of New York all attended. Tubman spoke a few words to the crowd: "I did not take up this work for my own benefit... but for those of my race who need help. The work is now well started and I know God will raise up

others to take care of the future. All I ask for is united effort, for ‘united we stand: divided we fall.’”⁹⁶ Against Tubman’s wishes, however, inmates were charged a \$150 entrance fee to the Home.⁹⁷ John C. Osborne was elected treasurer of the board of trustees of the home, managing the funds coming into the Home, thereby taking the financial responsibility for the institution out of Tubman’s stewardship.⁹⁸

In the meantime, Tubman remained a fixture at local and New York State suffrage meetings, in addition to attending meetings in Boston whenever she could.⁹⁹ In 1905, Tubman traveled to Boston with her great niece Alida Stewart, to attend an opening reception for the “Harriet Tubman Christian Temperance Union at Parker Memorial Hall.”¹⁰⁰ The *Boston Journal* noted that she was “one of the great benefactors of her race... For a woman of so great an age she is remarkably erect, her voice is clear, her manner bright and her wit keen.”¹⁰¹ Almost eighty-five, Tubman could still captivate a crowd.

That fall, Tubman attended a suffrage convention in Rochester, where she addressed the convention body “briefly.”¹⁰² In spite of the integrated meetings in New York and Boston, Tubman was forced to sleep in the train station the night before the convention because she had no place to go, although it was not entirely clear whether she had been refused lodging at local hotels because of her race, or because she had no money.¹⁰³ Emily Howland and Susan B. Anthony were not sure, either; puzzled over why Tubman did not contact either of them to secure lodging, they assumed she was being too independent-minded.¹⁰⁴

Tubman’s health continued to decline. By 1910 or so she was wheelchair bound. Her niece, Alice Brickler later wrote that, “Aunt Harriet had lost the use of her legs. She

spent her time in a wheel chair and then finally was confined to her bed.”¹⁰⁵ Brickler and her mother, Margaret Stewart Lucas, used to visit Tubman, bringing her “sweets, which she liked so well.” During one visit, young Alice wandered off into the field to pick flowers while her mother and Harriet talked. “Suddenly I became aware of something moving toward me through the grass,” Brickler wrote Conrad years later.

So smoothly did it glide and with so little noise. I was frightened! Then reason conquered fear and I knew it was Aunt Harriet, flat on her stomach and with only the use of her arms and serpentine movements of her body, gliding smoothly along. Mother helped her back to her chair and they laughed. Aunt Harriet then told me that that was the way she had gone by many a sentinel during the war. Seeing the swaying grass, she was mistaken for an animal or in the dim flicker of the camp fire, she appeared as a small shadow.¹⁰⁶

By 1911, now nearly ninety, Tubman was forced to enter the Harriet Tubman Home. “The most noted ‘conductor of the underground railroad’,” the *New York Age* reported in June, “was taken to the home last Thursday ill and penniless.”¹⁰⁷ Several more articles appeared in various newspapers, asking for donations to help defray the costs of caring for Tubman.¹⁰⁸ Florence Carter recalled that Eliza Wright Osborne and Jane Seward “helped her get to the hospital,” where Frances Smith remembered she had a “private room.”¹⁰⁹ Through the efforts of Mary Talbert, the Empire State Federation of Colored Women’s Clubs also helped raise funds for Tubman’s care,¹¹⁰ and family and friends also took on some of the financial responsibilities.¹¹¹ The following year, while Tubman continued to become more weak and frail in the Home, her brother William Henry, and William Henry’s daughter-in-law, Emma died after lingering illnesses of their own.¹¹²

On March 10, 1913, Harriet Tubman died of pneumonia. Gathered by her side for a final religious service, were Rev. E.U.A. Brooks and Rev. Charles A. Smith, who had known Tubman during the war when he was soldier with the Massachusetts 54th in South

Carolina, Smith's wife Frances, Martha Ridgeway, Tubman's nurse, Eliza E. Peterson of the Women's Christian Temperance Union of Texas, and Tubman's two great-nephews, Charles and Clarence Stewart.¹¹³ Before lapsing into a coma, Tubman supposedly told those around her, "I go away to prepare a place for you, that where I am you also may be."¹¹⁴

On the morning of March 13, several hundred Auburnians and dignitaries from out of town attended a service held at the Tubman Home. Later that afternoon, her body was taken to Thompson Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church on Parker Street, where hundreds more came to view her and pay their last respects. A final service at the church was followed by eulogies offered by various church and local dignitaries. All of them spoke of Tubman's accomplishments, that she exemplified morality and righteousness, and that her fight for freedom and justice dominated her "heroic life."¹¹⁵ Mary Talbert, President of Empire State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, recalled her last visit with Tubman, about a month before her death. Tubman grasped her hand as she was about to leave, urging her to "tell the women to stand together for God will never forsaken us," a message, perhaps, to the larger women's rights community to overcome their racial differences in pursuit of a common goal.¹¹⁶

The medal given to her by Queen Victoria was placed in the casket, and in her hands clutched a crucifix; her casket was draped in an American flag.¹¹⁷ She was buried at Fort Hill cemetery, next her brother William Henry, William Henry, Jr., and Emma Stewart. Two small pine trees, planted as markers for William Henry and Emma Stewart Jr., remained the only monument to the graves.

Fundraising began nearly immediately to raise money “for a memorial to perpetuate” Tubman’s memory.¹¹⁸ An elaborate ceremony was planned; a bronze tablet, “a token of the love and esteem of the people of Auburn,” was manufactured and paid for through contributions gathered from Auburn’s black and white community, and Booker T. Washington was invited as the guest speaker. On June 12, 1914, the tablet was unveiled by young Alice Lucas (Brickler), during a ceremony at the Auditorium Theater. It was later placed on the County Court House building in Auburn, “in recognition of her unselfish devotion to the cause of humanity.”¹¹⁹ The bronze tablet, bearing the likeness of Tubman in her later years, was inscribed with the following:

In Memory of Harriet Tubman. Born a slave in Maryland about 1821. Died in Auburn, N.Y. March 10th, 1913. Called the ‘Moses’ of her people during the Civil War, with rare courage, she led over three hundred Negroes up from slavery to freedom, and rendered invaluable service as nurse and spy. With implicit trust in God, she braved every danger and overcame every obstacle; withal she possessed extraordinary foresight and judgment so that she truthfully said –
 ‘On my Underground Railroad I nebber run my train off de track and I nebber lost a passenger.’
 This tablet erected by the citizens of Auburn, 1914.¹²⁰

The following year, through the efforts of friends and family, and Mary Talbert of the Empire State Federation of Women’s Clubs, a monument, designed by a Mrs. Jackson Stewart of New York, was placed on Tubman’s grave.¹²¹ In spite of a refusal by the U.S. government to provide Tubman with a military pension for her active service during the Civil War, “the last rites [were] of a semi-military character when the Relief Corps of the Charles H. Stewart Post, G.A.R.” conducted the closing services.¹²²

In the years following Tubman’s death, the black community maintained Tubman’s memory, mostly in segregated classrooms and literature on black heroes and heroines. Her narrative, now shortened and simplified, became part of a usable past for African

Americans.¹²³ Highly fictionalized accounts of her life began to appear in the 1930s and 1940s in young adult and juvenile works that sought to catch the wave of renewed interest in the Underground Railroad sweeping the nation at that time.¹²⁴

Interestingly, it was the American Communist movement that would begin to use Tubman as a feminist icon, beginning with recruitment literature aimed at women and the black community during the 1930s.¹²⁵ Featured in a small pamphlet published and circulated by the Workers Library Publishers, Tubman's brief biographical sketch hailed her as one of the most "courageous women that ever lived." The Communist Party reminded its readers, though, that while the slaves were struggling with freedom "from chattel bondage, a labor movement was growing up in America dedicated to the freedom of industrial slaves."¹²⁶ Once again, Tubman was appropriated as a "malleable icon," as David Blight calls her, suitable for consumption by a variety of audiences.¹²⁷

Earl Conrad, a former teamster union organizer in Harlem, a Communist sympathizer, and New York correspondent for the *Chicago Defender*, began researching a full-length biography of Tubman in 1938. For five years Conrad struggled to overcome racist attitudes toward his work. More than one librarian and archivist ignored or rejected his requests for help. Interviewees often thwarted his efforts to seek out the truth. Publishers turned down his manuscript time and time again. Only Associated Publishers, a newly founded African American press in Washington, D.C., agreed to publish Conrad's biography.

Conrad's work is remarkably well researched and documented. Fortunate to be able to interview individuals who knew Tubman when she was alive, Conrad documented many lost and forgotten stories of Tubman's life. But he was hindered by the lack of

available manuscript and archival material relating to Tubman, much of which had not been deposited in libraries and archives. He perpetuated some of Bradford's exaggerations, as well, for example repeating the erroneous numbers of trips to the South and slaves rescued.¹²⁸ He highlighted Tubman's military career (both with John Brown and the Civil War) and her suffrage activism, both struggles against oppressors appealing to someone with his views.

The record of Tubman's work for women's suffrage provides perhaps the best example of Conrad's struggles against the erasure of history. After Tubman's death, the memory of her active participation in the suffrage movement became obscured (as with most African American women's presence in the suffrage campaigns). As Conrad researched his biography, he faced an uphill battle to record her suffrage activism; she was not well known for her struggle on the behalf of women's rights. He contacted Carrie Chapman Catt, the former suffragist who had assumed the presidency of the unified National American Woman Suffrage Association organization after Susan B. Anthony stepped down in 1900 and who is credited with driving the movement to success in 1920. Though in her eighties at the time of their correspondence, Catt was still an active reformer. In response to an inquiry by Conrad as to her recollections of Tubman at various suffrage meetings, Catt denied knowing anything about Tubman. "There was a time, just after the Civil War," she wrote, "when the question of the rights of men and women and of Negroes brought forth much discussion, separately and collectively. During that period, I think it was possible that the leaders in the Women's Rights Movement... urged clever and unusual colored women to come to their conventions and to speak there... In my time colored women did come to meetings occasionally.... The

suffrage conventions always opened their doors hospitably to the colored race from the first to the last.” Moreover, she argued, Tubman could “not have been interested or thought much of women’s rights and she certainly would not have been interested in the suffrage.”¹²⁹ Why she thought this is not immediately clear. Catt maintained, however, that Tubman was an unimportant figure, and argued that if she were important then she would have been immortalized much like Sojourner Truth. Catt’s utter disregard for Tubman’s life history is striking, and her careless assessment of the contributions of African American women to the suffrage movement presaged the reception Tubman’s biography would continue to receive for several more decades.

When Conrad completed his manuscript on Tubman and decided to submit it to a literary fellowship competition in December 1939, he sent a copy of a prospectus to Catt and asked her to send a letter of support for his work to the competition committee. “I had hesitated about [submitting it to the competition],” he wrote her, “as I felt that the subject matter, concerning as it does a Negro woman, might meet with a discouraging reception.”¹³⁰ In January 1940, Catt responded that she had not read the prospectus, and though she does not mention it, she clearly did not write a letter of support. Her next letter was particularly harsh and critical. “I take it that this [manuscript] may not, necessarily, be printed,” she wrote, “but if it ever is, or anything like it, I will ask you to leave out my name, because, to tell the truth, I had never heard of Harriet Tubman when you first wrote me... She did not assist the suffragists or the woman suffrage movement at any time. It was they who were attempting to assist her. That much I know from the nature of things and to make Harriet Tubman a leader in the woman suffrage movement

and in all other good movements is quite wrong. There was no leadership on the part of the colored people at that time and there is very little even now.”¹³¹

One week later Conrad fired off a fiery retort. “I am ... amazed, even stunned, at your impressions of Negro leadership, or rather, as you say, their lack of it, and I naturally feel that you have dismissed a remarkable woman, together with a whole people...”¹³² Conrad argued point by point for the unparalleled contributions of African Americans to the nation, and called Catt’s prejudice out into the open. “[T]he province of Negro leadership and Negro contribution is one of the largest and least explored in American historiography.... Here you have circumnavigated a globe which Magellan has as yet conquered with a brush of your pen.... Something of that task is the job I have undertaken with Harriet Tubman, and I see in her a symbol of all that has been ‘from the nature of things’ sustained in disfranchisement, even unto this day. Yours for the enfranchisement of all peoples, Earl Conrad.”¹³³ Catt grudgingly responded that she was still not convinced of the leadership qualities of Tubman. She conceded that the Auburn, N.Y. suffragists like Anthony recognized Tubman as “unusual,” though she did not see this herself. She closed with a final summation: “I do not wish to be understood as opposed to the fame of Harriet Tubman. I only say that I am not yet convinced.”¹³⁴

Catt was not the only white person to devalue the importance of Tubman’s accomplishments. Originally titled “General Tubman,” Conrad’s biography met with significant resistance from publishers. Random House balked at her being compared to Joan of Arc. Simon and Schuster called it a “freak subject.” One editor asked Conrad why he was wasting his time on this topic. A few noted that Tubman was a “colorful character,” yet they would not add her story to their lists. Harper & Brothers called it “a

bit strong meat for us,” rather ironic, given that they had just published Richard Wright’s Native Son in 1940. John Day Company turned Conrad down because they already had one “feminist subject” on their list. Alfred Knopf told him that the market for such a topic was limited, and “furthermore your book suffers somewhat from the inflation of the factual material beyond reasonable bounds.” Ironically, given the current plethora of children’s biographies of Tubman now, Julian Messner rejected it as a possible children’s book. “I don’t think the life of Harriet Tubman is for children,” the reader wrote. “Now, I’m for blood and thunder, murders and revolutions, and life in general, but I must admit that beatings and whippings and throwing weights at negroes’ heads makes me wince and feel bad. And I doubt if to the children she is [an] important enough person to justify taking them through it... I do think you are right about having a negro as a subject. Why not Carver... or James Weldon Johnson?” International Publishers did agree to publish a small pamphlet, and other Communist and socialist newspapers and magazines published a few articles.¹³⁵ Finally, Conrad’s biography, Harriet Tubman, was published under the leadership of Carter G. Woodson at Associated Publishers in 1942.¹³⁶

Conrad’s book met with limited success, but it did lay the foundation for juvenile biographies of Tubman that emerged during the 1950s and 1960s. These secured Tubman’s place in the pantheon of American heroines, first as a black hero and then, later, as a feminist. The 1960s brought renewed attention to black history and historical figures, and by the 1980s her life story is a staple of mainstream juvenile literature. Still, racial and gender proscriptions have muted and reconfigured Tubman’s place in collective memory, and prevailing agendas continue to shape and configure her place as an historical actor. This has contributed to the perpetuation of the mythical, and thereby

limited, memory of Harriet Tubman. Though the myth has served the varied cultural needs of black and white Americans over time, the obscurity in which the details of her life remain is a deeply troubling reflection of the racial, class and gender dynamics of our nation.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN NOTES

¹ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage, ed., The History of Woman Suffrage, Vol 1, 1848-1861, 2nd ed. (Rochester, N.Y.: Charles Mann, 1887). 276-277.

² James B. Clark, "An Hour with Harriet Tubman," in Christophe: A Tragedy in Prose of Imperial Haiti, ed. William Edgar Easton (Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Company, 1911).

³ For detailed discussions of the split in the woman suffrage campaign of the late 1860s over the 14th and 15th amendments, see Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, African American Women and the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998). ; Aileen Kraditor, The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981). Ann D. and Bettye Collier-Thomas Gordon, ed., African American Women and the Vote, 1837-1965 (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1997).; and Ellen Carol DuBois, ed., Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights (New York: New York University Press, 1998).; and Ellen Carol DuBois, Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848-1869. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978).

⁴ Terborg-Penn, Vote. 24-35; Kraditor, Ideas. 166-167; William S. McFeeley, Frederick Douglass. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991). 265-273.

⁵ Philip S. Foner, ed., Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999). Quote from the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, July 1, 1858. 600.

⁶ Clark, "Hour with Harriet Tubman."

⁷ "Statement of Mrs. Florence Carter." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York.

⁸ "The Suffragists. Proceedings of Their Meeting Held Yesterday," *Auburn Morning Dispatch*, Auburn, NY, March 15, 1888.

⁹ "Suffragists."

¹⁰ "Suffragists."

¹¹ Clark, "An Hour With Harriet Tubman."

¹² See Kraditor, Ideas. Particularly Chapter Seven.

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- ¹³ Aileen Kraditor, Up From the Pedestal, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968. 253-263.
- ¹⁴ Anna Julia Cooper, A Voice From the South. rpt. New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969. 100.
- ¹⁵ Terborg-Penn, Vote. 61, 86-89.
- ¹⁶ Terborg-Penn, Vote. 88.
- ¹⁷ "Eminent Women," *The Woman's Era*, Boston, MA., Vol. III No. 1, 8.
- ¹⁸ "Official Minutes of the National Federation of Afro-American Women Held in Washington, D.C. July 20, 21, 22, 1896," National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, Washington, D.C.: 1902.
- ¹⁹ "Nfaaw 1896,"
- ²⁰ "Nfaaw 1896,"
- ²¹ "The Fight for the Ballot," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, Rochester, N.Y., Nov. 19, 1896.
- ²² Sarah H. Bradford, Harriet. The Moses of Her People. (New York: J.J. Little & Co., 1901). 142-143. "Yes, ladies... I was de conductor ob de Underground Railroad for eight years, an' I can say what mos' conductors can't say – I nebber run my train off de track an' I nebber los' a passenger." Tubman was accompanied to the meeting by her "adopted daughter, whom she had rescued from death when a baby, and had brought up as her own." This daughter could be either Gertie Davis, who would have been about 22 years old, or Eva Katy Stewart, a great-grandniece who would have been about 7 years old at that time. Tubman had fallen asleep during the meeting, according to Bradford, and when she was called to the stage, the daughter called to her "Mother! Mother!.. they are calling for you!" Bradford, Harriet, 1901. 142.
- ²³ Earl Conrad, General Harriet Tubman 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1990). 214.
- ²⁴ "Davis," *Cayuga County Independent*, Auburn, NY, October 18, 1888.
- ²⁵ "John Stewart." North Street Cemetery Records. Cayuga County Historian's Office. Auburn, NY.
- ²⁶ "Harkless Bowley Letters." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Reel 1, Box 3 folder d2. NYPL - Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. New York.. Letter, Bowley to Conrad, August 29, 1939. This child was Evelyn Katherine Helena Harriet Stewart Northrup.

²⁷ "Stewart," *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, Auburn, N.Y., March 3, 1893.

²⁸ "Interview with Helen W. Tatlock [Mrs. William Tatlock]." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York.

²⁹ Emma P. Telford. "Harriet: The Modern Moses of Heroism and Visions," Cayuga County Museum, Auburn, NY: circa 1905.

³⁰ Bradford, *Harriet*, 1901. 151. Robert Taylor reported the same year that every visit he made to Harriet's home from the Tuskegee Institute, he found "strangers under her roof, - aged, maimed, blind, orphans... At this writing [sometime in 1901] she has under her 'vine and fig-tree' two friendless old women and two homeless orphans." See Robert W. Taylor, *Harriet Tubman: The Heroine in Ebony*. (Boston: George E. Ellis, Printer, 1901). 15.

³¹ "Tatlock Interview."

³² "Tatlock Interview."

³³ "Harriet [Tubman] Davis, Widow of Nelson Charles, Alias Nelson Davis, Pension Claim." HR 55A-D1. Papers Accompanying the Claim of Harriet Tubman. Record Group 233. National Archives. Washington, D.C. Miscellaneous note, Jan. 24, 1887, "2nd Sess. 49th Cong. On motion of Mr. Levering leave was granted *Harriet Tubbman* [sic] to withdraw papers from the files of the HOPR. Record, 2nd Sess 49th Cong. Vol. 18, pt1, page 954." Tubman also received some help from Philip Wright in Medford, Massachusetts, who apparently retrieved the files and sent them to her in Auburn. He encouraged her to have the claim petition taken up by her local representative. "Nobody deserves a pension more than you," Wright wrote to her, "and believe that if the matter were pursued by the proper person - the representative from your district in New York - you could get it." See letter, Philip G. Wright to Harriet Tubman, November 24, 1887.

³³ Donald R. Shaffer, "'I Do Not Suppose That Uncle Sam Looks at the Skin': African Americans and the Civil War Pension System, 1865-1934," *Civil War History*, June, 2000.

³⁴ Shaffer, "Pension System."

³⁵ "Tubman/Davis Pension File."

³⁶ Don Shaffer, in his work on African American Civil War pensioners, has discovered that while eighty-four percent of white widows who applied received pensions, only sixty-one percent of black widows did.

³⁷ Shaffer, "Pension System." Shafer also describes many other problems with African American pension cases, including the high incidence of illiteracy which hindered the application process, and the fact that many African American soldiers and their dependents had to hire lawyers and claim agents, some of whom were incompetent or used fraudulent practices. African American pensioners also often lacked necessary biographical documents, and tracking witnesses was often far more difficult and expensive, and ultimately, it was blatant racism that played a role in the final outcome of many cases which were denied.

³⁸ "Tubman/Davis Pension File." H.R. 4982, 55th Congress, 3rd Session.

³⁹ "Tubman/Davis Pension File." Petition to "Honorable Sereno E. Payne, House of Representatives, 28th district, State of New York."

⁴⁰ "Tubman/Davis Pension File." "Senate. 55th Congress, 3rd Session. Report No. 1619."

⁴¹ "Tatlock Interview."

⁴² For an excellent discussion of the role of churches in black women's lives and organizational activities, see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Black Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). See also, Darlene Clarke Hine, Kathleen Thompson, A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America. (New York: Broadway Books, 1998). 184-186.

⁴³ "Bills Menace Historic Church," *Syracuse Post Standard*, Syracuse, N.Y., January 28, 1982.

⁴⁴ "Letter, Harriet Tubman to Mary Wright, May 29, 1896." Ms.A.10.1 no. 90. Boston Public Library Rare Book Room. Boston.

⁴⁵ "Letter, Jane Kellogg for Harriet Tubman to Ednah Dow Cheney, April 9, 1894." Ms.A.10.1 no. 36. Boston Public Library Rare Book Room. Boston.

⁴⁶ "Letter, Tubman to Cheney, Apr. 9, 1894."

⁴⁷ "Letter, Jane Kellogg to Ednah Dow Cheney, June 25, 1894." Ms.A.10.1 no. 37. Boston Public Library Rare Book Room. Boston.

⁴⁸ The property contained approximately 25 acres, with two houses, one brick and one wood frame, both with ten rooms each, ample space for Tubman to operate a shelter and infirmary.

⁴⁹ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. 149-150.

⁵⁰ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. 150.

⁵¹ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. 150. See also, Bonnie Carey Ryan, Douglas V. Armstrong, Archaeology of John Brown Hall at the Harriet Tubman Home: Site Report. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Archaeological Research Report, 2000). P. 16; and James E. Mason, Edward U.A. Brooks, Tribute to Harriet Tubman, the Modern Amazon. (Auburn, N.Y.: Tubman Home, 1914).

⁵² The directors were: George E. Carter, James E. Mason, Henry J. Calles, Wesley A. Ely, and Charles A. Smith. See "Harriet Tubman Home, Certificate of Incorporation." Cayuga County Clerk's Office. Auburn, N.Y. See also, "New Corporations," *New York Times*, New York, April 5, 1896.

⁵³ Mason, Tribute.

⁵⁴ "Tubman to Wright, May 29, 1894." Tubman apparently wanted to sell copies of the new edition at the "Methodist Centennial at New York" that fall (1896), but the book was not ready until the following spring.

⁵⁵ Lillie B. Chase Wyman, "Harriet Tubman," *The New England Magazine*, March 1896.; and Rosa Belle Holt, "A Heroine in Ebony," *The Chautauquan*, July 1896. Wyman, and possibly Holt, may have also received information about Tubman from Eliza Wright Osborne.

⁵⁶ Holt, "Heroine."

⁵⁷ "Tatlock Interview."

⁵⁸ "Tatlock Interview."

⁵⁹ "Concerning Women," *The Woman's Journal*, Boston, April 17, 1897.

⁶⁰ "Helen Tufts Bailie Journal, 1886-1936." Helen Tufts Bailie Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁶¹ "Concerning Women." See also, "Scrapbooks Vol. IX : "the Anti-Slavery Struggle"." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁶² Hannah Parker Kimball, "Christ in the Slums," *The New England Magazine*, July. 635.

⁶³ Wilbur Henry Siebert, The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1898).

⁶⁴ "The Underground Railroad: Manuscript Materials Collected by Professor Seibert, Ohio University." Vol. 40. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA.

⁶⁵ "Tubman Interview [Seibert]."

⁶⁶ Clark, "Hour with Harriet Tubman."

⁶⁷ Clark, "Hour with Harriet Tubman." The letter, "was worn to a shadow," Tubman told Clark. "It got lost, somehow or other. Then I gave the medal to my brother's daughter to keep." Queen Victoria supposedly sent Tubman a fine lace shawl, now in the possession of a great niece, Mariline Wilkins. See Rosemary Sadlier, Tubman: Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. Her Life in the United States and Canada. (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1997). 65.

⁶⁸ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. "Harriet's friends will be glad to learn that she has lately been for some time in Boston, where a surgical operation was performed on her head." 151. Efforts to locate records of this surgery have been unsuccessful. Thanks to Jeffrey Meflin at the Massachusetts General Hospital Archives for researching this.

⁶⁹ Bradford, Harriet, 1901. . 152-153. "When I was in Boston I walked out one day, an' I saw a great big buildin', an' I asked a man what it was, an' he said it was a hospital. So I went right in, an' I saw a young man dere, an' I said, 'Sir, are you a doctah?' an' he said he was; den I said 'Sir, do you t'ink you could cut my head open?' ... Den I tol' him the whole story, an' how my head was givin' me a powerful sight of trouble lately, with achin' an' buzzin', so I couldn' get no sleep at night.

An' he said 'Lay right down on dis yer table,' an' I lay down.

'Didn't he give you anything to deaden the pain, Harriet?'

No sir; I jes' lay down like a lamb fo' de slaughter, an' he sawed open my skull, an' raised it up, an' now it feels more comfortable.

'Did you suffer much?'

Yes, sir, it hurt, ob cose; but I got up an' put on my bonnet an' started to walk home, but legs kin' o' gin out under me, an' dey sont fer a ambulance an' sont me home."

Samuel Hopkins's grandson, Samuel Hopkins Adams, later wrote that Harriet refused anesthetic when it was offered. She preferred a bullet to bite on, she told him, like the Civil War soldiers she had held down during medical amputations during the war.

"Harriet lay motionless as a log, mumbling prayers through teeth clenched on the bullet." See Samuel Hopkins Adams, Grandfather Stories. (New York: Random House, 1947). 277.

⁷⁰ "Letter, Agnes Garrison to Ellen Wright Garrison, November 24, 1899." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.. Agnes is the daughter of Ellen Wright and William Lloyd Garrison II. Agnes also noted in her letter that Tubman "refused refreshments because it was Friday" and she "always fasts until 12 on that day - until the Lord comes down from de cross."

⁷¹ "Letter, Agnes Garrison to Ellen Wright Garrison, November 26, 1899." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.. The transcript of these interviews has not been located.

⁷² "Letter, Agnes Garrison to Ellen Wright Garrison, December 1, 1899." Garrison Family Papers. Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. Northampton, MA.

⁷³ There is no record of who these children are. The 1900 census does not show these children in her household

⁷⁴ Letter, Sarah Bradford to Franklin Sanborn, May 11, 190(1?), in Jean Humez, Harriet Tubman: The Life and Life Stories. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, forthcoming 2003).

⁷⁵ Letter, Sarah Bradford to Franklin Sanborn, May 11, 190(1?), in Humez, Tubman.

⁷⁶ "Emily Howland Diaries." Howland Family Papers. Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College. Swarthmore, PA.. See entries for December 21-23, 1901; January 4, 18; Nov. 15, 18.

⁷⁷ Conrad, General Tubman. 216. Susan B. Anthony dated this January 1, 1903. Emily Howland also wrote in her diary of this gathering of aging suffragists at Osborne's home, noting that "Harriet said we should never all be there again together I tho't so I dreaded to turn away from the charmed group of [?] souls." See "Howland Diaries." November 18, 1902. The juxtaposition of this meeting in Auburn, where Tubman and perhaps other women of color were in attendance, is striking when compared to the NAWSA national convention in New Orleans in March 1903. There Susan B. Anthony, along with Elizabeth Blackwell, Elizabeth Smith Miller, Elizabeth Gilman (Dorothy Dix) left the segregated National suffrage convention to speak to the local black women's suffrage meeting at the Phyllis Wheatly Club, creating somewhat of a controversy. White Southern suffrage associations were not eager, nor willing in many cases, to call for suffrage for all women, preferring a racial restriction of some sort (often a roperty or literacy requirement that would have effectively disfranchised most black women in the south. (Ida Husted Harper, ed. The History of Woman Suffrage. Vol. V. New York: J.J. Little & Ives Co., 1922. 60)

⁷⁸ National Association of Colored Women, "Minutes of the Second Convention of the National Association of Colored Women... August 14th, 15th, and 16th, 1899" (paper presented at the Second Convention of teh National Association of Colored Women, Chicago, IL, August 14-16, 1899 1899).

⁷⁹ "Tubman Home Dedicated," *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, Auburn, N.Y., June 23, 1908.

⁸⁰ William J. Walls, "Twenty-Second Quadrennial Session, A.M.E. Zion General Conference, 1904," in The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (A.M.E. Zion Church, 1974).

⁸¹ Walls, "A.M.E.Z. 1904." Though the article claims this was the arrangement made at the time of the deed transfer, it appears that Tubman retained interest in the rents only until the current leases expired. No other details are known at this time. See "Harriet Tubman Davis to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church of America." Deeds. Cayuga County Register's Office. Auburn, N.Y.

⁸² Walls, "A.M.E.Z. 1904."

⁸³ Walls, "A.M.E.Z. 1904."

⁸⁴ Walls, "A.M.E.Z. 1904."

⁸⁵ "Smith Interview." Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection. Microfilm, 2 reels. Schomburg Center for Research In Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division: The New York Public Library. New York.

⁸⁶ "The Moses of Her People. Proposed Memorial to Harriet Tubman, a Negress," *The Sun*, New York, May 2, 1909.

⁸⁷ "Moses." "When I geb de home over to Zion Chu'ch w'at you s'pose dey done? Why, dey make a rule dat nobody should come in 'dout dey have a hundred dollahs. Now I wanted to make a rule dat nobody should come in 'nless dey didn't have no money 't all."

⁸⁸ "Moses."

⁸⁹ Frank C. Drake, "The Moses of Her People. Amazing Life Work of Harriet Tubman," *New York Herald*, New York, Sept. 22, 1907. Frank Drake was married to Sarah Bradford's daughter, Emily.

⁹⁰ Drake, "The Moses of Her People. Amazing Life Work of Harriet Tubman."

⁹¹ "Moses."

⁹² "Howland Diaries." October 14-17, 1905.

⁹³ "Howland Diaries."

⁹⁴ See "Dedication of Harriet Tubman Home," *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, Auburn, N.Y., June 24, 1908.; and "Tubman Home Open and Aged Harriet Was Central Figure of Celebration," *Auburn Citizen*, Auburn, N.Y., June 24, 1908.

⁹⁵ "Celebration."

⁹⁶ "Celebration."

⁹⁷ "Celebration."

⁹⁸ "Celebration."

⁹⁹ Tubman joined the meeting of the New York Suffrage Association when it met in Auburn in October 1904. See "Howland Diaries." October 19, 1904.

¹⁰⁰ Boston Journal, "Harriet Tubman at the Hub," *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, Auburn, N.Y., May 20, 1905.

¹⁰¹ Journal, "Hub."

¹⁰² "With the Suffragists," *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, Auburn, N.Y., Oct. 28, 1905.

¹⁰³ "Howland Diaries."

¹⁰⁴ Mildred D. Meyers, Miss Emily. Emily Howland, Teacher of Freed Slaves, Suffragist, and Friend of Susan B. Anthony and Harriet Tubman. (Charlotte Harbor, Florida: Tabby House, 1998). 209-210.

¹⁰⁵ "Letter, Alice Lucas Brickler to Earl Conrad, July 28, 1939." Earl Conrad/ Harriet Tubman Collection. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library. New York.

¹⁰⁶ "Brickler to Conrad, July 28, 1939."

¹⁰⁷ "Harriet Tubman Ill and Penniless. Noted Colored Woman Taken to Harriet Tubman Home Which She Founded," *New York Age*, New York, June 8, 1911.

¹⁰⁸ "Moses of Her Race Ending Her Life in Home She Founded," *New York World*, New York, June 25, 1911.; and "When Slaves Were Spirited 'Underground to Canada,'" *The New York Evening Sun*, New York, June 10, 1911.

¹⁰⁹ "Carter Statement." And "Smith Interview."

¹¹⁰ Humez, Tubman.

¹¹¹ Private papers, Judith Bryant. Emma Stewart, the wife of William Henry Stewart, Jr., incurred over \$200 in hospital bills for Tubman.

¹¹² Records of Fort Hill Cemetery, Auburn, NY.

¹¹³ "Death of Aunt Harriet, 'Moses of Her People'," *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, Auburn, N.Y., March 11, 1913.; and "Harriet Tubman Is Dead," *Auburn Citizen*, Auburn, N.Y., March 11, 1913.

¹¹⁴ "Death of Aunt Harriet."

¹¹⁵ "A Race of Harriets Would Secure the Future of the Negro, Says Bishop Blackwell," *Auburn Citizen*, Auburn, N.Y., March 14, 1913.

¹¹⁶ The Auburn Citizen, March 14, 1913, 5

¹¹⁷ "Aunt Harriet's Funeral," *Auburn Daily Advertiser*, Auburn, N.Y., March 13, 1913.

¹¹⁸ "To the Colored Race. Mrs. Seward Was Always a True Friend, Declares This Negro," *Auburn Citizen*, Auburn, N.Y., Nov. 9, 1913.

¹¹⁹ "To a Most Heroic Negress. Fitting Memorial of Harriet Tubman Davis Is Appropriately Unveiled," *Auburn Citizen*, Auburn, N.Y., June 13, 1914.

¹²⁰ "Program of the Unveiling of Bronze Tablet in Memory of Harriet Tubman." Harriet Tubman Verticle File. Cayuga Museum. Auburn, N.Y.

¹²¹ "Proposes Monument over Tubman Grave," *Auburn Advertiser Journal*, Auburn, n.Y., June 15, 1914.; and "Unveil 'Tubman' Memorial," *Cleveland Advocate*, Cleveland, OH, July 17, 1915.

¹²² "Race of Harriets."

¹²³ Benjamin G. Brawley, Women of Achievement. Written for the Fireside Schools of the Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society. (Chicago: Women's American Baptist Home Mission Society, 1919).; Benjamin G. Brawley, Negro Builders and Heroes. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937).; Elizabeth Ross Haynes, Unsung Heroes. (New York: DuBois and Dill, 1921).; George F. Bragg, Heroes of the Eastern Shore. (Baltimore: G.F. Bragg, 1939).; George F. Bragg, Men of Maryland. (Baltimore: Church Advocate Press, 1925). ; Thomas W. Burton, History of the Underground Railroad, American Mysteries, and Daughters of Jerusalem. (Springfield, Ohio: Whyte Printing Co., 1925). See also, Henrietta Buckmaster, Let My People Go. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941).

¹²⁴ David W. Blight, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). Pp. 231-237. See, Hildegard Hoyt Swift, The Railroad to Freedom: A Story of the Civil War. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1932). ; Anne Parrish, A Clouded Star. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948). ; Oscar Sherwin, "'I'se Free 'Fo' I Die'," *The Negro History Bulletin* June 1940, (1940):

¹²⁵ Sasha Small, Heroines. (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1937).

¹²⁶ Small, Heroines. 20.

¹²⁷ Blight, Race. 332

¹²⁸ Conrad did his own accounting and came up with less than nineteen trips, etc. But then, oddly, he decided to use Bradford's numbers instead. See James McGowan, "Harriet Tubman: According to Sarah Bradford," *Harriet Tubman Journal* Vol. 2., no. 1, January, (1994):

¹²⁹ Letter, Carrie Chapman Catt to Earl Conrad, June 1, 1939. EC/HTC, Reel 1, Box 3, Folder d4.

¹³⁰ Letter, Earl Conrad to Carrie Chapman Catt, December 20, 1939. EC/HTC, Reel 1, Box 3, Folder d4.

¹³¹ Letter, Carrie Chapman Catt to Earl Conrad, January 25, 1940. EC/HTC, Reel 1, Box 3, Folder d4.

¹³² Letter, Earl Conrad to Carrie Chapman Catt, February 3, 1940. EC/HTC, Reel 1, Box 3, Folder d4.

¹³³ Letter, Earl Conrad to Carrie Chapman Catt, February 3, 1940. EC/HTC, Reel 1, Box 3, Folder d4.

¹³⁴ Letter, Carrie Chapman Catt to Earl Conrad, February 17, 1940. EC/HTC, Reel 1, Box 3, Folder d4.

¹³⁵ See EC/HT Reel 1, Box 1, "Correspondence".

¹³⁶ See Earl Conrad papers, Cayuga Community College, Bourke Memorial Library, Auburn, NY. See also EC/HTC, Reel 1, Box 3, Folder C1.

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